

# Pearce twins carry torch in United Foundation drive

By Mary Rodrigue  
staff writer

Kristie and Kimberly Pearce are going to light the torch this year for the United Foundation Torch Drive.

At the ripe age of 4 1/2, the identical twins from Farmington Hills are already experienced fund-raisers. They've been poster children and they've tap danced into the hearts of one local TV audience.

Although a picture of health with blond pigtails, saucer blue eyes, and excited giggles over the prospect of having their picture taken, the girls have cystic fibrosis, a genetic disease that affects the lungs.

In cystic fibrosis, a thick mucus clogs the lungs, trapping germs and making breathing difficult. Victims are highly susceptible to infection. The mucus can also interfere with digestion by preventing the flow of enzymes from the pancreas into the small intestine, so food isn't digested properly.

Up until 1968, most children with cystic fibrosis died before the age of 5. Today the average life span is about 21 years.

Sandwiched in between tap and ballet lessons, splashing in the neighbor-

hood pool, and preschool, the twins have therapy sessions twice a day with their mom, Lynn Pearce, a registered nurse.

Every three months they pay a visit to Children's Hospital of Michigan for a checkup. Medication is part of their daily routine.

Their older brother, Brett, 6, a student at Beechview School, also has cystic fibrosis.

"TO LOOK AT them, they are beautiful, gifted and talented children," Mrs. Pearce said. "It's hard to believe that anything is wrong."

Because their disability is low profile, victims and their families have a harder time emphasizing a need for support. Yet cystic fibrosis is the most fatal genetic disorder in America.

United Foundation provides \$80,000 a year to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Last March the foundation's Bowl for Breath raised another \$280,000.

Mrs. Pearce is convinced that research is the only hope of finding a cure for her afflicted offspring.

"That's why I tell everyone about cystic fibrosis," she said. "I owe it to the children. If we get \$1 million, we may find the person who will develop a cure."

"It might be just one little gene defi-

ciency." The disease occurs when a child inherits two genes for cystic fibrosis from each parent — that happens once in every 1,600 births, according to the foundation. There is no way to detect the disease before birth.

According to statistics, only one in four of the Pearce's children should have had the disease. Yet all three children were born with it. Brett's was diagnosed at 8 months. The twins were found to have the disease when they were less than 2 weeks old.

"I GET depressed sometimes, but it passes," Mrs. Pearce said.

"We live a day at a time, accepting that we have three beautiful children. We want them to experience as much as they can."

Next September when the twins are in kindergarten, an aide will perform the back-patting therapy that removes mucus from their lungs and airways. They won't miss any schooling.

"They know cystic fibrosis affects their lungs," Mrs. Pearce said. "And they know they have to take medicine to grow big and strong."

"They're young enough so they're not aware of what's happening. They're too young to know what a short life means."



Kristie and Kimberly Pearce will be the torch bearers for the United Foundation Torch Drive this year. RANDY BORST/staff photographer

# UF volunteer dispells myths

By Mary Rodrigue  
staff writer

Patricia Gerbig, super volunteer, would like to explode a couple of myths about the United Foundation Torch Drive.

"People think all the money collected goes to inner city Detroit. Last year the Torch Drive serviced 97,000 Oakland County residents," said Mrs. Gerbig, a West Bloomfield Township housewife and campaign chairman.

"And we hear bad information about United Foundation's high overhead. Maybe 6 percent of cost is staff salary. It's largely a volunteer effort with minimal staff."

Although the annual Torch Drive runs Oct. 12-Nov. 5, Mrs. Gerbig is al-

ready busy mustering up troops of volunteers and drafting a game plan that includes a small business campaign blitz.

This is her second year as chairman. Last year \$12,449,962 was raised despite one of the worst recessions in Detroit history.

"Hopefully the economy will be better in September. Our emphasis is to increase pledges — even if people give just 50 cents more than last year," she said.

Budgets for the 135 child care, family, health, recreational and group services in the tri-county area aided by Torch Drive funds are dependent on the amount of dollars donated.

"I'm going into the campaign realistically but hopeful that people will dig



Patricia Gerbig down and give," Mrs. Gerbig said. "The need is greater when the economy is poorer. We're servicing a new breed of clientele."

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## INSIDE ANGLES

**CALLING ALL ADULTS** The summer teen center sponsored by Farmington Youth Assistance will open July 1 and needs adult volunteers to staff the place.

More than 350 13-17-year-olds visited the drop-in center at Shawasee Recreation Center last summer for a variety of activities. More are expected this summer.

If you'd like to help, call summer activities chairman John Pinkerman at 476-3840.

Farmington Youth Assistance is financed by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

**TORONTO, CEDAR POINT,** Chatham, Ontario and Michigan State University tours are being offered at discount rates this summer by Adults for Kids. The MSU tour is planned July 24 and costs \$8, which includes bus fare to the Lansing campus. Cedar Point amusement park passes are \$9.50 and good any day all season. A weekend trip to Wheels Inn in Chatham runs from \$37 a night, July 31 to Aug. 2. The Toronto trip is from \$21 a person.

Flyers can be picked up at Farmington community libraries, the YMCA, Focal Point Studio, World Wide Appliance, Clappison's Conroy Insurance and Washington Clothiers. Or call the Adults for Kids message center at 855-3252.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to four Farmington area seniors, recipients of scholarships from the Farmington Education Association, the union representing the district's teachers. Linda Claesera, from Harrison High School, was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship for the University of Michigan-Dearborn. Kathryn Richardson of Farmington High School got \$750 for Albion College. Ann Marie Horvath from North Farmington High was awarded \$750 for Michigan State University. And Mike Frontezak from Harrison won \$750 for Swarthmore College.

The four graduated in the top 15 percent of their class.

**ATTENTION, KIDS** The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation department has dropped its \$5 fee for summer playground activities.

Children 6-13 can join in the fun Monday, June 22, through Thursday, July 30. Supervised activities include sports, games, arts and crafts and special events.

The fun centers are Duckel Middle School, Flanders elementary, Forest, Gill, Larkshire, Longacre, Middlebell, William Grace, Wood Creek and Wooddale elementary schools.

For more information, call the recreation department at 474-6115.

**FREE HEALTH CHECKUPS** for children are being offered at the Woodland Medical Center in Novi on June 28, Children's Health Day. Tests include vision and hearing, blood pressure, height and weight and a scoliosis test for children of walking age.

Four Woodland pediatricians will be available to answer any general health questions parents may have. The Woodland center is at 41955 W. 12 Mile, east of Novi Road. For more information, call 348-8800.

**EARLY RISING SHUTTERBUGS** can practice their photography at a Sunrise Nature Photo Session Saturday, June 27 from 7-9 a.m. at Independence Oaks County Park in Clarkston. Participants should bring their own camera, film and insect repellent. Enrollment is limited to the first 30 people. To preregister, call 625-0577 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Park entry fee is \$2 a vehicle. Independence Oaks is two miles north of I-75 on Sashabaw Road.

**KUDOS** to Farmington area residents who won honors at Detroit Country Day School this month. Senior Roger Falk of Farmington Hills received the Schlegel Leadership Award for most outstanding academic, intellectual and moral leadership. Falk also won a \$1,000 Michigan Legislative Merit Award Scholarship.

Robert Sinard, also of Farmington Hills, won a National Merit Scholarship, a Michigan Mathematics Prize Competition certificate of merit for placing in the top 4 percent of math students statewide, a University of Michigan Regents Alumni Scholarship, a Phi Beta Kappa certificate, and the Country Day White Scholarship Cup for having attained the highest scholastic average at a recent school honor assembly.

Robert Lins, a junior, was awarded a mathematics certificate of merit by the Michigan Mathematics Association for scoring in the top 4 percent.

**LIBRARIES IN MICHIGAN** want your creativity. The Michigan Library Association is seeking a unique emblem for their service. This logo would appear in public, school, academic and special libraries to identify their location and services to people in all walks of life.

A logo contest is open to all amateur and professional artists, patrons, librarians; no age restriction, no limit on the number of individual entries.

Send entries to Michigan Library Association, Sally Arrivee, Logo Contest, Riverview Public Library, Riverview 48192.



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