

# Building bridges between people



A Motown number was included in the 1960s medley, which was very popular with area high school audiences.

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

**W**ANT TO PERFORM with Up With People but you don't sing, dance or strum a guitar? If you're loaded with personality, go for it anyway.

"Up With People feels it can teach you to sing, dance and play an instrument. But it can't teach you how to be a person," cast member Rick VonFeldt explained to area students interested in joining the spirited international troupe.

"Our interviews are based on personality alone," VonFeldt has been with the 450-member group since graduating from high school in June. Up With People, which includes youth from 24 nations, will entertain Jan. 24 at Super Bowl XVI in the Pontiac Silverdome.

As well as the 12-minute halftime stint there, they are presenting public shows in Birmingham, Grosse Pointe, Livonia, Madison Heights, Pontiac and Ypsilanti. Four Up With People casts also are putting on 150 different area shows as a community service of the

General Motors Foundation. "We're building up ourselves as well as building bridges of communication and understanding between people," explained Ken McGovern, a former cast member now doing advance work for the group.

**KEEPING A PACE** that would shake most seasoned entertainers, the youth smiled heartily through engagements in community centers, high school gyms, elementary schools, Oakland County Jail and even the Hospice of Southeastern Michigan in Southfield.

While Up With People shows vary from place to place, one musical number goes with them always. Wherever they appear, members of the audience wind up singing the group's theme song.

"Up, up with people you meet wherever you go," sing members with the help of senior citizens, teens, school children or business people.

"Now give yourselves a big hand." Since it's start in 1966, Up With People has visited 2,500 cities in 47 nations on six continents. About 7,000 young adults ages 17-25 compete for 500 slots

in five casts. Members pay \$5,300 tuition to take part in the family-oriented musical production which features original numbers like "What Color is God's Skin," a medley of hit tunes and a collection of folk songs and dances from around the world.

While in an area performing, they stay with local families and visit cultural highlights. A usual stint is four days with eight to 10 appearances. But for their third Super Bowl appearance, Up With People brought together four casts.

"This is the single biggest thing we've ever done," said McGovern, who came to the group from Maine.

**FOR THE FIRST** time, the group uses a multi-image slide presentation to tell the story of Up With People visually. Another new addition is a medley of popular songs and dances from the 1960s — which went over in a big way with local high schoolers.

"The Beatles best symbolized a decade which ended with people singing 'Let the Sun Shine In,'" they were told during assemblies. "You know, it wouldn't hurt to be singing that today."

While the numbers are very polished — and the singers even sport neon-colored outfits with fringe and wear mini-skirts and shorts in some numbers — most of the songs are chosen for their wholesome messages.

Audiences are told "There's magic in the moment when someone understands someone else," and asked "Can we sing a song of peace in a world that's full of fear?"

"There's not a heavy political or religious message. We just want to instill a sense of hope," explained McGovern.

"But in order to be successful you have to have an entertaining show. This is a competitive market."

For Von Feldt, the last six months with the group have been "terrific."

Since leaving Topeka, Kansas, he's learned how to dance and even some staging. "It's just amazing," said the 19-year-old, who believes college will mean a whole lot more to him next year because of this year's experience. "I work my rear end off, but I've never seen so many people smile. I couldn't imagine college teaching me what I've learned here."

## Clergy speak in joint Catholic-Jewish meet

League of Jewish Women's Organizations of Greater Detroit and League of Catholic Women of Detroit have set its annual joint meeting for Feb. 11 in Temple Beth El on Telegraph Road at 14 Mile Road in Birmingham.

The event, which is in honor of the 75th anniversary of the League of Catholic Women, will start at 12:15 p.m. with cake and coffee to be served by the Temple Beth El Sisterhood, whose president is Eleanor Roberts.

Guest speakers will be the Most Rev. Edmund C. Szoka, Archbishop of the Diocese of Detroit, and Rabbi Marc H. Tannenbaum, director of National Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee. Their topic will be "The Next Decade in Catholic-Jewish Relations."

Rabbi Richard C. Hertz, senior rabbi of Temple Beth El, will give the invocation. The benediction will be given by The Rev. Alex Brunett, director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The presidents of the League of Jewish Women and the League of Catholic Women are Marilyn Shakne and Marilyn Lundy respectively. Vice president of program is Marjorie Saulson.

The League of Jewish Women's Organizations, founded in 1927, links together the local divisions of national Jewish women's organizations and serves as a coordinating vehicle for the interchange of thoughts and methods of procedure, striving to eliminate duplication of effort, and enrolling Jewish women power in behalf of humanitari-

an causes, both communal and worldwide.

The League of Catholic Women, Detroit's oldest social service organization, provides social services to those in need regardless of race, creed or color. It operates six human service agencies in Detroit and four Bargain Center, resale shops in the tri-county area.

The league is an affiliate of Council of Catholic Women (CCW-AD), a federation of all Catholic Women's organizations in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The public is invited for a \$1 fee at the door. Reservations are not necessary.

## The Graves take office for Marriage Encounter

Jim and Joann Graves of Farmington Hills were recently elected treasurer-couple for National Marriage Encounter, an organization affiliated with the Family Life Office, Archdiocese of Detroit.

The emphasis of Marriage Encounter is on communication between a husband and wife who spend a weekend together when they can concentrate on those matters of fundamental impor-

tance to their marriage. Marriage Encounter is not sensitivity training. Presentations are given by a Marriage Encounter team made up of two or three married couples and a priest. Following these presentations the couples making an encounter weekend, talk only to each other in the privacy of their own rooms; not to the team couples or the group at large.



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