

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



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Articulation is her forte

District's first speech correctionist winds up 30-year career this week

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

THE TEACHER who started Farmington Public Schools Speech Department will retire at the end of this week.

"I was it. I was the only therapist here for two years," said Joan Courville who came into the district in 1955 when it had a total of eight schools. At the time she was Joan Hoffman, a graduate of the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa. Eagle, Gill and Shwassee elementary schools opened that year. Her title was "speech correctionist," and she divided her time between all eight schools.

Today she and her 14 counterparts in the district are known as "speech and language pathologists," which is but one of the changes she has seen in her 30-year career.

"The staff kept growing along with the increased technology, increased techniques," she said. "I don't think there is one of us that hasn't taken some additional specialized training. Some of us have become specialists in articulation, or stuttering, or working with pre-schoolers. We're scattered around in all buildings now and can work with just about any kind of speech or language problem stemming from just about any physical or mental handicap."

COURVILLE WILL be the guest of honor at a retirement party, given by friends she has made in the school district, tomorrow night in Farmington Community Center. But she will be in her classroom at Kenbrook Elementary School until Friday, which is parent-teacher conference day.

"I particularly want to stay for that," she said. "I've known some of these parents for so long, and so well. We have parents here who are so appreciative of what we do, and that's what's made my work so gratifying. There were a lot of success stories along the way."

Courville said she has worked with children who have had trouble with articulation, stuttering, voice, cerebral palsy, hearing, and some who had problems that just did not fit into any one category.

She was the first speech pathologist

in the district to earn the Certificate of Clinical Competence, a feat she is particularly proud of, and elicits her own specialty as articulation.

She organized the department as it kept growing and held the title of department chair until 1978. She can't remember the number of student teachers that were assigned to her, "maybe 20-25 at least," and she put herself on call as a speaker to talk about her field to numerous classrooms of students, to PTAs and parent groups, in seminars and workshops.

She has worked with as many as 175 children in a week's time, but rarely in large groups. Most of her work at Kenbrook is done on a one-to-one or one-to-two basis.

One of her fun-jobs was serving as coach for the Special Olympics.

TRAVELING with her husband, Fred, is on Courville's retirement agenda, but she said she will keep in touch with the profession, one way or another.

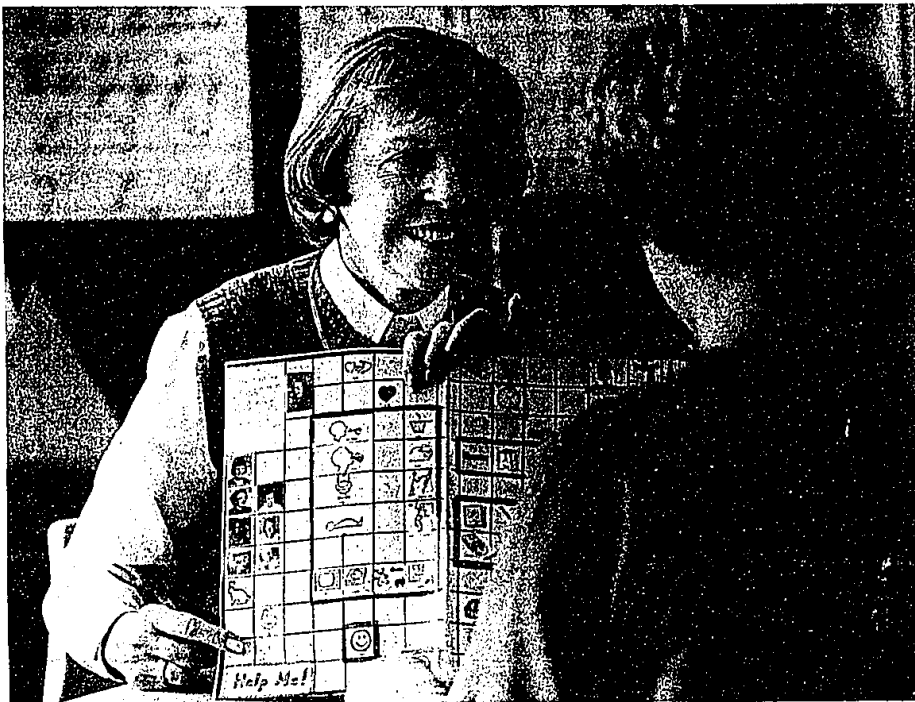
"I have a lot to give, a lot to share," she said. "Maybe I can set myself up as some kind of consultant. Many times I've devised all the materials, made up an entire program for one individual. I can still do that if a teacher finds herself stuck with a problem. I've certainly done that before."

Another thought that is attractive to her comes from a group within the Birmingham Musicale who entertain her Kenbrook students once a month with audience-participation music and song.

"They come without charge to I don't know how many classrooms and nursing homes just to bring fun. The kids enjoyed those visits, so much. I don't know how good a singer I am but it would be an enjoyable thing for me as well as a good way to keep in touch with the students I've worked with for so long," she said.

Courville is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an education honor society, and the American, Michigan and Oakland County Speech, Language and Hearing associations. She has served on the board of directors of Livingston-Oakland Counties Credit Union and as secretary for Farmington Education Association.

She will keep in touch with her profession by retaining membership "in most, in the majority of them," she said.



Joan Courville helps one of her students with lessons using a communication board. The teaching aid is one of many devices the

speech and language pathologist has created through the years to make learning a little easier for the children in her classes.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Laughter brings a host of benefits

By Richard Lech
staff writer

SMILE AND the whole world smiles with you.

Frown and you could be stifling your creativity, hampering your ability to learn and repressing your body's natural pain killers.

The Rehabilitation Institute (RI), in Detroit has found laughter to be one of the best medicines, according to Dan Tomaszewski. He is the director of education for the institute, which treats physically disabled patients.

"People heal faster when they laugh. That's the bottom line," he said.

WITH THAT in mind, his department set up a Light Brigade of employees who encourage patients to look on the bright side. It's a difficult task, considering that the patients are being treated for such afflictions as strokes, spinal-cord injuries, amputations and closed-head injuries.

"We let people know it's OK to laugh because a lot of people feel laughter is allowed only at certain times," Tomaszewski said.

"Most of our patients have gone through severe changes in lifestyle. Sometimes people forget how important humor is at a time like this. They only focus on the negative things."

"Since humor is contagious, the RI also organizes Staff Laifs in which institute employees are encouraged to enjoy a few good hearty belly laughs.

"There is a ripple effect," said Nancy Schmitt, RI's patient education coordinator. "If the staff feel good, they're going to go back to the patients and help them feel good."

The institute recently put on its second annual Staff Laif, with fun consultant Pat Poole of New York City leading the employees through a session of non-competitive games called New Games.

In one game, Hagoo, two people would try to maintain a stone face while everybody around them tried to make them laugh. In another, Build a Machine, they attempted to make a machine, such as a photocopier, with their bodies. In another, People to People, the staff stood in a circle, looking at each other while they laughed.

"When people get inside the circle, they tend to forget they have something else to think about, as long as they can focus on someone else looking silly," Poole said.

LIFE IS not all fun and games for Poole. A native Detroiter, she has a full-time job as data manager of the radiation oncology department at Columbia University in New York.

But she also has been involved in running New Games sessions on the side since 1978. One of the developers of the New Games, Joel Goodman, conducted the institute's first Staff Laif last year.

Poole said she's found that besides giving people a license to laugh, the New Games allow people to open up to their co-workers.

"If something is preventing an office from progressing, it gives people an opportunity to air their frustrations through games. It might loosen people up to the point where they can say, 'Hey, this has been bothering me.'"

Tomaszewski said games and humor are a great way of "melting down" the negativity that holds people in depression.

"It's impossible for a person to say, 'I'm depressed' and raise their arms in a game at the same time," he said.

RESEARCH HAS shown that laugh-

ter brings all kind of benefits to the laughter, he said.

"The physical act of laughing stimulates the release of endorphins in the body, which are natural pain killers," he said. "It also increases creativity and increases your ability to learn. And it helps you build relationships."

Schmitt said the institute has used laugh therapy with persons stricken with aphasia, the inability to express themselves through speech or to comprehend things other people say.

"The therapy helps them recover their lost speech and mental processes," she said.

The RI staff concedes that humor isn't appropriate in all situations, and humor at someone else's expense is liable to leave a bitter aftertaste. But they do believe that maintaining a healthy sense of humor is an important way of maintaining a healthy mind and body.

'People heal faster when they laugh. That's the bottom line.'

— Dan Tomaszewski
Rehabilitation Institute



In Court of Honor

Mike Finegan, of the area's newest Eagle Scouts, is flanked by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Finegan of Farmington Hills. His Eagle Court of Honor was hosted by Boy Scout Troop 179, which is sponsored by First Presbyterian Church of Farmington.

Anchorman to speak at Prayer Breakfast

Farmington Area Jaycees annual Community Prayer Breakfast, the local version of the Presidential Breakfast in Washington, D.C., will be at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, in Glen Oaks Golf Course clubhouse.

Speaker for the morning is George Sells, WJBK-Channel 2 anchorman. The program will also include the presentation of the Jaycee Distinguished Service Award, and several service awards to local business persons for their contributions to the Jaycees.

Sells joined WJBK in 1983 as an an-

chor and reporter for Eyewitness News, seen at 5:30, 6 and 11 p.m. He came from KOA-TV in Denver, Colo., where he anchored the early evening and late night newscasts. He has worked for KPRC-TV in Houston, Texas, as a correspondent for ABC News in New York City, for KYW-TV in Philadelphia, Pa., and WSM-TV in Nashville, Tenn.

He is a resident of Bloomfield Hills and an avid golfer. Reservations for the breakfast are \$7.50 and can be made by calling Tena Swanson, 478-6740.

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