

Beacon photo by Barbara Tychert

Airborne visitors fascinate children

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VIRGINIA BEACH beacon

Vol. 17, No. 108

Published Three Times Weekly With The Ledger-Star and The Virginian-Pilot

March 13/14, 1979

Plenty of room at day care center for handicapped

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You have a handicapped person in your care. You need someone to take care of him while you run errands or attend to business. Who can help?

The month-old Drop-In Respite Center at Bayside Presbyterian Church would like to help. It has funds to provide after-school or drop-in care for the handicapped six days a week. But because few people are taking advantage of the service, it's only offered three days a week.

Robin Handford, who is supervising the program, would like to see more people using it.

The center is a program of the city's Mental Health/Mental Retardation Community Services Board. It is designed for people 2 years old and older.

Two staff people man the center. They were hired through the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). Both have bachelor's degrees and are experienced in working with the handicapped.

The center offers working parents a place where they can send their children for afternoon care between the time school is out and the time they get home from work.

Parents can also leave their handicapped children at the center for a few minutes or several hours while they attend meetings, visit the doctor or run other errands.

The center's staff can arrange for transportation from the Center for Effective Learning on Witchduck Road and from the Adult Activity Center on Virginia Beach Boulevard.

The Bayside center is open from 3 to 7 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays.

Mrs. Handford said the Saturday sessions are working well, but the weekday program is suffering.

The program has guaranteed funding.

It has toys and equipment for the clients to use. If it had more clients it could become the full-time operation that its supporters had anticipated it would be.

Although the center is underused, it is operating well with what clients it has, said Mrs. Handford.

The two staffers are good at devising games and activities that even the severely handicapped can enjoy, she said.

Wayne Smith, principal of the CEL, said he and Caryl Felty, assistant principal, and the school's PTA have endorsed the center.

The idea is good, Smith said. Parents of handicapped children often have difficulty finding babysitters for their disabled children. The center offers them a handy and convenient service.

He said he does not know why the idea has not caught on yet. "I'm really surprised they don't have more people taking advantage of it," Smith said. "It's like trying to open up a restaurant." It takes a while to get customers, he added.

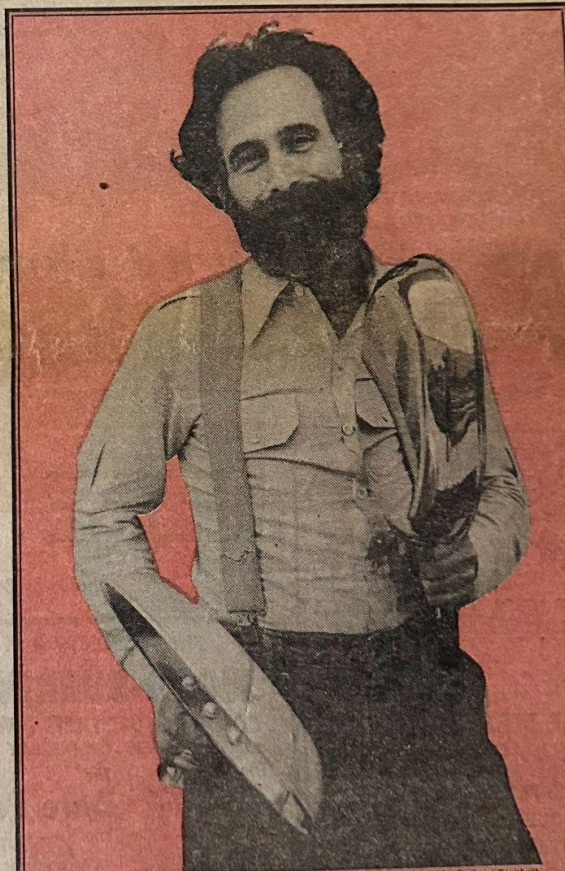
Parents pay from 50 cents to \$1 per hour for their children's care at the Bayside center. The rate is based on the family's ability to pay.

Brothers and sisters of handicapped children are welcome at the center too. Parents pay half-price for non-handicapped children.

The center does not provide meals, but a parent can prepare a snack and sent it along with his child, said Mrs. Handford.

The center is an offshoot of the city's home-based respite care program. That program trains workers and then makes them available to the families of handicapped people. The home-based workers will go to a handicapped person's home and care for him for a couple of hours or for as long as several days.

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Beacon photo by Barbara Tychert

Joel Feldman

A relaxed businessman and his philosophy

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(Caption upside down)

(Our home the last 13 years)

study in the daily news