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Mime Troupe of Retarded Adults Wins Recognition for "The Giving Tree"

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MIME TRouPE OF RETARDED ADULTS 
WINS RECOGNITION FOR THE GIVING TREE

DAYTON, Ohio, March 4, 1988--A University of Dayton mime troupe of retarded adults that performs a short stage adaptation of Shel Silverstein's popular children's book, The Giving Tree, for area churches and community groups is receiving more than just applause these days.

Its originator has been recognized by Ohio Public Images for the group's efforts to promote greater understanding of people with developmental disabilities. Lynn Berlon, a Kettering resident who works with the Office of Ministry and Religious Education Services (MORES) at UD, received an award of excellence in the category of special events at a Media and Awareness Awards Luncheon in Columbus on March 4. Ohio Public Images is a statewide non-profit organization that promotes positive perceptions of people with disabilities.

Berlon, a mother of eight, began working with handicapped persons six years ago when she and her husband, Bob, joined UD's support staff for "Faith and Light," a Christian association of mentally retarded adults. When a mentally retarded woman told Berlon about her sadness when a mother withdrew her child from the woman's touch in a grocery store, Berlon searched for "a vehicle" that would allow retarded adults to find acceptance within society.

"Could a little bit of greasepaint protect our people from rejection?" she wondered after a group of retarded adults dressed as clowns won a prize for a float she helped them build for Kettering's Holiday at Home parade.

With the support of MORES, Berlon formed the mime troupe, which features a narrator and five retarded adults in red T-shirts, blue jeans, white gloves
and clown make-up re-enacting Silverstein's simple story of a budding
relationship between a boy and a tree. Cathy Corpstein, a UD food service
employee, plays the boy.

"The Giving Tree is the story of unconditional love," Berlon said. "For
me, it epitomizes the role of the handicapped person in my life."

As part of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Awareness
Month, The Giving Tree will be performed at a Mass to recognize persons with
disabilities on Saturday, March 19 at 4:30 p.m. in the Immaculate Conception
Chapel at the University of Dayton. It is open to the general public.

For a small fee, the mime troupe is available to perform during church
services or before community groups. For information, call Lynn Berlon at
293-8423 or Marilyn Bishop at 229-4325.

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