

# Friends

## YWCA Friendship Program warms lives of disabled children

By MARY FORAN  
Of the Emerald

"Jay's a ham," says University freshman Cindy Lima as her 8-year-old exceptional friend grins broadly, stuffing marshmallows into his mouth between smiles. He excitedly gives the sign for "awesome" as he dances around the room in perfect time to Cindy's guitar strums.

Jay Taylor plops down on the floor to exchange Christmas presents with Cindy because they haven't had a chance to be together since last term. Cindy gets woolly gloves and a bear hug, and Jay gets Rowlf — a Muppet hand-puppet — which Cindy hopes to use to develop Jay's verbal skills.

An exceptional child in many ways, Jay is loving, cheerful — and has cerebral palsy, a disorder of movement and posture caused by brain damage that can affect a child's ability to walk, talk, and sit up straight, and depending on the extent of damage, may involve hearing and vision as well.

Through a careful screening process, Kristy Bennett, director of the YMCA's Exceptional Friendship Program, "matches" volunteers with exceptional children in a program designed to bring students and community people into the lives of physically and emotionally disabled youths/ages 4 to 18.

SEARCH credits are available through the University's Special Education Department, and volunteers are given tips on working with the handicapped at weekly program meetings. However, Bennett says the main emphasis of the program is to develop the independence and individuality of the exceptional child through the long-term friendship of someone who cares.

"It's excellent work experience," Bennett adds, saying that persons interested in special education careers can use the program to "feel out" whether they really want to work with the handicapped. There are 27 active volunteers so far, says Bennett, with 26 children still on a waiting list. "And we're always getting new referrals from the Easter Seal School and the Eugene public schools."

"We could really use more men in the program," says Bennett. Only two of the 27 volunteers are male. "There are quite a few



Photo by Patrick Sullivan

Jay Taylor, who suffers from cerebral palsy, spends a late Christmas with his 'exceptional' friend, Cindy Lima. Lima, a University freshman and volunteer in the YWCA Exceptional Friendship Program, says she has become very close to Jay, often spends seven or eight of her weekend hours with him beyond the weekly minimum of three required in the program.

single parent families where the child's only contacts are female. They need a male role model in their life," says Bennett, adding that some parents specifically ask for a male volunteer for their child.

Bennett says her personal goal is to make the experience positive enough so that the volunteer's relationship with the child continues beyond the minimum six-month commitment. "One volunteer has been in the program for three years," Bennett says.

The exceptional child's need for a long-term, caring friendship is essential, says Bennett. "If the volunteer cannot continue seeing the child we urge them to keep in touch by phone or letter so that it is not another rejection for the child." The program commitment may soon be extended to nine months

to further emphasize the need for a growing relationship.

"I'll always keep in touch with Jay," says Lima. "I really care about him." All the girls in Cindy's

dorm know Jay and he loves to visit, she says. "I think anybody would have a good time doing this. We've become so close — he's my special little brother in

Oregon." Her own little brother in California watches her with interest when she practices sign language, she says.

"The experience is good for both people," says Lima, adding that most people are uninformed about the handicapped. Once people are pushed into coming close to the handicapped, they realize there are no barriers there, she says. "It's a lot of fun."

"Normal" kids have a tendency to look," says Lima, who approaches the problem directly by explaining the situation to the children so they won't back off. "Adults are almost worse than children. They'll pull their kids away."

Lima says the time commitment is not a burden, adding that she sometimes spends seven or eight hours with Jay over a weekend far beyond the minimum three-hour weekly activity commitment.

"I look forward to spending the time with him — I think of it as my fun time," says Lima. The program isn't forced on you, she says, and you have a long time to decide. The volunteer first observes the child in a classroom setting before making any commitment.

For more information on the Exceptional Friendship Program, call director Kristy Bennett at 686-4439, or come to the information table in the EMU from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today.

## Adelphé House

The Shiloh House has recently been purchased to meet the needs of cooperative interdenominational Christian housing for women students.

Located at  
1910 University Street

Winter Term:

Capacity for 25 women students - \$60/month;  
with kitchen privileges.

By Spring Term:

Completely remodeled capacity for 50 women  
students - full service room and board.

For information and application  
call Lois - 683-2904

**TOMORROW**  
**Banana Split Sale at**  
**Dairy Queen**  
Buy one at regular price  
get the second one for  
**1¢** 13th & Hilyard

## HAIR TODAY

### NATURAL HAIR DESIGN FOR WOMEN & MEN

#### DRY CUT

designed for your hair and you. For those on a tight schedule.

**\$6.50**

#### WET HAIRCUT AND STYLE

designed for you and your hair for easy care and the air-waved style. A completed style to go anywhere.

**\$9.00**

#### COMPLETE STYLE

includes shampoo, moisturizing conditioner, blow dry and hair cut designed for you. A completed easy care style.

**\$12.00**

Remember: we carry the finest of professional hair care products for your use.

Downstairs in the EMU  
close to the Recreation Center  
687-1347

40 E. 10th Ave.  
Downtown  
484-1200

561 E. 13th Ave.  
Across from Max's  
485-4422