

Prescott Mime Troup performed at festival

The first weekend in April was one that 10 acoustically handicapped children from Prescott Elementary School and their teachers won't forget.

That weekend they flew to Washington, D.C., toured museums and theaters, met members of Congress, and got Mickey Mouse's autograph.

It also was the weekend they captured the attention of 200 people with their performance as the Prescott School Mime Troup during the National Very Special Arts Festival (NVSAF).

"They performed perfectly, and we're so proud of them," said Em Petersen, teacher of the acoustically handicapped.

The youngsters, ages eight to twelve, each pantomimed typical summer activities in the park. Petersen said a routine set to the song, "Send In The Clowns," was the creation of the teachers and students. And, she added, much diligent work went into the production.

"We had only a month to put it together," she said, "and for the first two and one-half weeks, we all wondered if we could really do it."

Children looked Professional

Audience reaction was a testament to the children's success.

Unit S teacher Marcia Smith said a woman who has a television show in Boston said that the performance was more professional than amateur.

"She asked me if we were a traveling professional troupe," Smith said.

Another teacher of the handicapped at Prescott, Susie Erickson, said a member of the National Theater for the Deaf vigorously signed, "Keep it up!"

The professionalism that the audience saw probably resulted from the work of Anay Hinrichs, a professional mime who worked with the children before their trip to Washington. Working under the professional name Anay, she

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The mime troupe prepared well for the trip. (Photo courtesy of Gail Folda, the Lincoln Journal).



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Prescott Mime Troup

writes mimodramas for mime Marcel Marceau and helps with choreography.

Theater course led to festival

The children from Unit S, deaf and acoustically handicapped, began their dramatic experiences this winter with a 10 week drama course. The class was sponsored by the School Special Theater, a joint project of the Lincoln Public School Special Education Department, Lincoln Junior League and the Lincoln Community Playhouse.

The instructor for the theater class, Lynnette Schwinn, submitted their names to the National Committee on Arts for the Handicapped as possible representatives from Nebraska to the NVSAF. Petersen said they found out at the end of February that they were chosen.

The Prescott students were among the more than 750 handicapped youngsters from across the country at the NVSAF. The program for the festival described the celebration as a major highlight to the International Year of the Child which "provides national recognition of the skills and abilities of youngsters with emotional, physical, sensory and mental handicapping conditions."

Being with other handicapped individuals was good experience for both herself and the children, Erickson said. "The children accepted

others with different handicaps without the slightest notice," she added.

Children take success in stride

Erickson said the children also were delighted that they could communicate with so many different people at the festival.

All Prescott students shared in the experience of the troupe, Petersen said. They waited outside the school with banners and notes, and cheered as the youngsters boarded the bus for the airport.

In the future, the Prescott Mime Troup will perform for the donors who contributed \$4,000 to finance the Washington trip. They also will appear at the Nebraska Festival for the Handicapped on May 5.

