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A PROGRAM OF SERVICE

BY *CAROL SHOUN*

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Head, Heart, and Hands

One of the greatest gifts that we can give to the children of the church is to teach them the joy and faith-sustaining fulfillment that come from active service in God's kingdom. By nature, to be a child is to be dependent upon, and served by, others. In the church, we lovingly devote ourselves to teaching and ministering to our children. We teach them about service, but provide them only limited opportunities for its practice. Many of our children grow to adulthood never having experienced the profound blessing of giving themselves to others.

The leaders of our congregation have committed themselves to helping each member grow in the service of the Kingdom. Expressed in the words of Ephesians 4:12, "Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry" is the theme they have adopted to help define our mission as a congregation. To this end, our Wednesday evening program, called Head, Heart, and Hands, gives our members the option of classroom study or organized service activities in which they can work with and learn from each other.

A special component of the Head, Heart, and Hands program involves our elementary-aged children. They participate each week in lessons and activities that allow them to integrate the biblical principles of service and ministry into their real-life experiences. As they develop a sensitivity to the needs of others, the children are being empowered to respond to those needs in immediate and meaningful ways. The genuine interest and enthusiasm with which the children have undertaken the projects week after week are indicative of the program's success.

Middle school and high school students as well as adults are encouraged to work alongside the children as helpers and role models. One enriching aspect of our evenings together has been the development of warm relationships across age groups between individuals who might not otherwise have had occasion to interact.

Activities that we have found to be beneficial include:

- preparing meals to take to sick members
- baking cookies and making cards for our shut-ins
- preparing and teaching simple Bible lessons for our preschoolers
- replenishing attendance cards and straightening songbook racks
- assembling care packages to send to our students who are away at college
- writing notes of encouragement to members of our mission team
- making simple toys for inner-city preschoolers served by our mission team
- sending notes to children who have visited in or been absent from their Sunday school classes
- making bulletin board and door decorations for Sunday school classrooms
- developing and rehearsing a dramatic/musical program for the annual banquet given in honor of our senior members
- making table decorations and favors for children at the local Ronald McDonald House

The opportunities for children to minister are manifold—as rich and varied as the creative ideas of those who would teach them to serve. It is our hope that these consistent, positive experiences of hands-on ministry will equip each of our children for a lifetime of valuable service in the Kingdom.