

Local organization

CAREs for the blind



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By GWEN SISSON
sdnlife@bellosuth.net

Some people wake up to Special K, and then there are other people nation-wide who wake up to “Special Kay.” “Special Kay” is the nickname coined by some of the clients who participate in the “Our Daily Bread” cassette devotional program that is part of CARE ministries, based in Starkville. And “Special Kay” is Starkville’s Kay Verrall, who serves as a volunteer reader. CARE is a national ministry based in Starkville, that provides inspirational fiction and non-fiction books, devotions, and the Bible on cassette tape for U.S. residents who have been declared legally blind or visually impaired. Cassettes are “checked out” to be kept as long as needed and at no cost.

The director is B.J. LeJune and the entire operation is run in a small office with volunteers. CARE began in 1989 and has grown through word of mouth, branching out nationwide. CARE is financed through a grant from SOAR and through donations from local churches.

Verrall met LeJune at at National Day of Prayer event and soon began volunteering.

“Everyone just loves her,” said B.J. LeJune. “They wake up to ‘Special Kay.’”

“As I spent time in the office and talked with clients over the phone I came to realize how very isolated and lonely many of them were, and how much they needed basic materials to help them grow spiritually,” Verrall said. “I began reading Sunday School lessons, Our Daily Bread Devotions, books, and other materials on tape, and have, through the years, done a little bit of everything in the way of support for the ministry. I am constantly amazed by how much the little we do seems to mean to those we serve.”

Qualified clients for CARE are typically people with a lot of time on their hands. According to LeJune, 70 percent of people diagnosed as legally blind or visually impaired are unemployed. She said this ministry is a service for those who want to become spiritually mature and find answers.

LeJune said cassettes are used because of the ease of rewinding. With the CD track system, it is difficult to go back and listen to something missed. With CDs, LeJune said, listeners have to start the book or the devotion all over again.

A duplication machine allows CARE volunteers to keep a master copy of a book on cassette or CD at the office, and a copy is developed as a book is requested. CARE has over 5,000 master copies of inspirational books on file. Permission has been received from the publishers for the ministry’s purposes.

One of the problems CARE faces is advancing technology. Cassettes are becoming harder and harder to find. The ministry accepts donations of old cassettes that are in good condition.

In addition to the availability of the a cassette ministry containing a variety of Christian materials, Bible studies and publications, CARE Ministries offers a variety of services to people who are blind or visually impaired, their families and their churches. Services are available through direct service or the Internet and include:

- u Monthly distribution of the “Our Daily Bread” devotional and the “Evangelical Sunday School Teacher’s Edition” lessons on cassette tape.
- u A comprehensive Resource List of other Christian agencies providing services to people who are blind or visually impaired.
- u Listing of Christian and educational resources and special media for children who are blind including websites such as: “Visual Impairment Guide: A Parent’s Guide to Resources about Visual Impairment.”
- u A comprehensive listing of secular resources for people who are blind in cooperation with the Information and Resource Referral Project at the Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University.
- u A link to a comprehensive listing of Blindness Related e-mail lists.
- u Resources and networking for pastors, evangelists and ministers who are blind or visually impaired.
- u Prayer Team that will pray for special needs and requests.
- u Personal assistance and spiritual help through the toll free number (1-800-336-2232).
- u Technical assistance for churches that would like to more effectively serve blind, deaf and disabled people in their communities.
- u Development of a cooperative association with other ministries through the DAVID Project, a national database of Christian materials available from a variety of Christian organizations.

In addition to donations of old cassettes that are in good condition, other ways to assist CARE include financial contributions and the donation of old eyeglasses for ministry opportunities around the world.

For more information, contact CARE at 323-4999 or e-mail at careministries@bellsouth.net.