

Efforts Have Paid Off . . .

# Auto Plants Employ Blind Workers

LANSING, Mich. (UPI) — Eight hours a day, five days a week, Barbara Yerke stands next to a conveyor at an Oldsmobile assembly plant and loads pistons into a tray, four at a time.

It's monotonous work, but the pay is good. She doesn't complain, and her supervisor is happy with her work.

"I wish I had 26 other people in the department like her," he said.

There are 18 others working at Oldsmobile who are like Mrs. Yerke, at least in one respect. All are legally blind.

Oldsmobile officials, working in cooperation with the Michigan School for the Blind and various state and federal agencies, have actively recruited blind workers for appropri-

ate jobs at the company's three Lansing plants.

It is part of a concerted effort by General Motors to improve its record of hiring the handicapped and to encourage other companies to do the same. So far, GM's efforts have paid off — both for the company and the handicapped.

For Mrs. Yerke, 33, getting hired at Oldsmobile almost a year ago was a personal triumph.

"I was always told, 'No, you can't because you can't see,'" she said. "And I always said, 'Yes, I can. Whether I can see or not, I can still do it. Don't let anyone tell you you can't.'"

Company officials estimate that GM's total U.S. work force of 580,000 hourly and salaried employees includes 25,000 persons with some form of physical

disability such as blindness, deafness, amputated limbs or paraplegia, or disabling conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes or heart disease.

The number of handicapped employees nearly doubles if alcoholism and drug addiction, which the government lists as disabilities, are included.

"A lot of people don't want to admit they are handicapped, and as a result, it's hard to ascertain exactly how many we have," said Laurence L. Vickery, GM's director of employment relations.

Vickery said the company's effort to hire and keep handicapped workers on the payroll "is not done entirely for humanitarian reasons."

The Department of Labor, in a program similar to the Affirmative Action program for hiring women and minorities, requires firms that perform government contract work to hire the handicapped and modify their facilities to accommodate handicapped workers.

"We're not going to hire every handicapped person that knocks on the door," one GM official said. "But we're going to employ as many as we can."

Richard McCarthy, personnel director at GM's Hydramatic Division plant at Ypsilanti, Mich., which was named "Employer of the Year" in 1977 by the Michigan Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for its hiring record, said jobs for the handicapped are not a "handout."

"This is not a sheltered workshop situation where we create jobs the handicapped are capable of doing," McCarthy said. "We employ the handicapped in the real world. Our employees must be productive. They must be qualified for the job."

At Oldsmobile, a visitor would have difficulty trying to single out the blind employees from their sighted co-workers. They perform their jobs at production pace, move about the plant easily and socialize comfortably with other employees.

"They go through the same employment procedures, do the same jobs and get the same pay as anyone else," said Joe Fritz, an Oldsmobile safety engineer

who heads the company's blind placement program. "We only require that they be capable of getting to and from work, into and out of the plant, unassisted."

Fritz cited these cases in point: —George Ellena, an Oldsmobile employee for 18 years, operates a press in the plant's water pump department. The job is stationary but requires manual dexterity.

"You wouldn't know he's totally blind — the way he does his job and gets around the plant," Fritz said. "It's unbelievable."

—Russell Watson, who is considered legally blind, has worked at Oldsmobile for eight years. He uses a pneumatic tool to attach a part onto engine crankshafts as they come down the assembly line.

George Leonard is totally blind. He has worked at Oldsmobile for a year and a half in the rear axle assembly department. "He's so handy, he does several jobs," Fritz said. "There obviously are some jobs the blind cannot perform in an automobile assembly plant," Fritz said. "But it's remarkable what they can do if you give them the chance."



**PROUD WORKER** — Eight hours a day, five days a week, Barbara Yerke stands next to a conveyor at an Oldsmobile assembly plant and loads pistons into a tray. It's monotonous work, but the pay is good for the legally blind employee. (UPI Telephoto)

## GIANT Shoe Mart

SALE Prices effective thru Saturday

Save to 2.61 on Nylon/Suede 5000 Meter Jogger for Men and Boys

786 Reg to 1047

MEN'S & BOYS Joggers

An Outstanding value on this green or blue nylon suede-trimmed jogging shoe with Action gripper soles for comfort and support. Cushioned insoles and cushioned arch. Men's sizes 6 1/2 to 12. Boy's 11 to 6

Men's & Boys Tube Socks Our Reg 1.07 SALE 88¢

Everybody Saves Everyday!

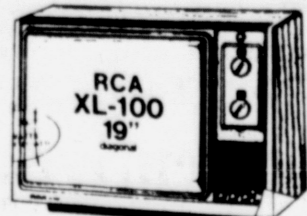
**GIANT SHOE MART**  
JAMESWAY PLAZA  
Rt. 422 Kittanning

Master Charge

# Introducing

the new 1979 models

RCA PRESEASON VALUE DAYS



FC443 Reg. Price \$419.95  
INSTANT REBATE: — 20.00  
**\$399.95**

**RCA** 1979 1978

1978 RCA COLOR CONSOLES



STARTING AT **\$499.95**  
Plus Tax and Trade

SELLING OUT the 1978 models

# SMITH'S TV

150 S. McKean St. Across from Shop 'N Save  
OPEN DAILY 9 - 5; FRIDAY 'TIL 9  
PHONE 548-2351

## Today's Basic Education: Subject of Council Meeting

By PATRICIA McCORMACK  
UPI Education Editor  
Common sense answers to questions about the basics in public education were given a while back at a Portland, Ore., conference sponsored by, among others, the Council on Basic Education.

Diane Ravitch, keynote and assistant professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, likened a basic education to a liberal one — "both of which rest on the premise that what happens in school is intrinsically important."

"Educators must once again understand that they have an important job to do, that schools do make a difference," she said.

She knocked "radicals and social scientists who in the past 10 or 15 years have claimed... that schools don't make a difference."

"This is a spurious argument that has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Now, the public is disgusted with the idea of schools as custodial institutions; the anti-intellectual tide in American education is ebbing," she said.

In main education fields, other experts spoke on what basics mean to them.

Highlights of their presentations at the meeting also sponsored by the Portland Public Schools, neighboring Beaverton Public Schools, Portland State University and Lewis and Clark College.

Science: Students of all ages should participate in scientific

experiments and then be able to "frame questions with more precision and appreciate diverse lines of investigation," said Dr. Howard J. Hausman, former director, Pre-College Division, National Science Foundation. "The content and structure of science, together with development of processes used in the sciences, helps students to learn to think critically — an important education goal."

English: Precision also was stressed by Dr. Stanley B. Greenfield, professor of English at the University of Oregon. "A consciousness of language and the levels of language, and an awareness of the possibilities of precision and the pitfalls of imprecision in communication are desirable goals of English instruction," he said. The goals can be achieved by "learning to control the word and sentence." He recommended that schools push poetry "because poems

embody language at the most conscious level of precision."

Mathematics: The goal of mathematics is not rote learning, a la the method used in the schoolhouse of the 1880s, but problem-solving "and a knowledge of principles, patterns, and notational agreements," according to Karen Billings, who teaches math at Roosevelt Junior High in Eugene, Ore.

Foreign Language: Training courses and courses that educate should not be confused, said Harry Reinert, teacher of German and English at Edmonds High in Edmonds, Wash. "The former enables one to make a living and the latter make the living worthwhile." Learning a language is intrinsic in any educational program, he says, "and enables students to gain insight into human intelligence and into other cultures, and to experience the joy of cracking a secret code."

### HYMN FESTIVAL

July 30, 1978 at 7:00 P.M.

(Opening Night of Clarion Co. Fair)

REDBANK VALLEY MUNICIPAL PARK

3 Miles North of New Bethlehem on Route 28

Community Chorus will be Featured



**Greens 'N' Things**  
WE'RE MOVING!  
**Clearance Sale**

HELP US MAKE OUR MOVE NOW THRU SAT.!

We'll Be Moving to Our Brand New Location on 419 Ford St. (Formerly La Moda Shoppe), on August 3rd! Stop In Now at 420 10th St. and Save On Many Odds And Ends We Don't Want To Move!

**SAVINGS up to 50% OFF**

We'll Close Mon. thru Wed. of Next Week To Relocate!

**Greens 'N' Things**  
HELP US MAKE OUR MOVE

Announcing  
A NEW FACE  
IN TOWN



NEW OWNER -  
MANAGER OF THE  
ROY E. JONES OIL CO.

*George Lentz*

Please feel free to stop in the office and introduce yourself.

**WHERE YOU'LL FIND**

- EXCELLENT SERVICE
- QUALITY PRODUCTS
- LOWER PRICES

ASK ABOUT OUR

- 30-Day Credit and 12 Month Budget accounts. NEVER a carrying charge. Applications are available by sending in coupon.
- Additional Storage Tanks can be incorporated into our Budget Plan.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR LOW SUMMER FILL PRICES

46¢ ... #2 FUEL

49¢ ... KEROSENE

Prices Guaranteed Until August 31st, 1978

COUPON  
I am interested in more information on Roy Jones Oil Budget Plan & 30 Day Credit.  
NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
Please send me a Credit Application.

*Roy E. Jones Oil Co.*

Phone 548-1568

820 Butler Rd. West Kittanning

Marketeer of

**Keystone Products**