

SHARE dance raises money for camp



YVETTE MARIE DOSTAINI / THE TIMES

David Ciastko, an employee at McDonalds in Munster, has participated in the Share Foundation's camp for 12 years.

Foundation aids mentally disabled adults

BY BEVERLY THEVENIN
Times Correspondent

MUNSTER - Campfires, friends, crafts and games - some of the necessary ingredients for a great summer camp.

Many kids can't wait until summer to start planning. As soon as the daffodils are blooming, they begin making plans - what to buy, what to pack.

being away."

"I like to camp in the tent," said David, an employee at McDonald's restaurant in Munster. "And there is a nice fireplace and crafts and fireworks."

Cook-outs, field trips, blueberry picking, clowns, magicians and barbershop quartets ensure a fun-filled week for campers.

But David's face really lights up when he talks about helping the Rev. Dennis Blaney serve Mass during the camping week.

Founded more than 10 years ago by Blaney, Share Foundation, which has no church affiliation, is made up of parents of those who are mentally disabled and of other interested volunteers.

"At camp, the campers are accepted for who they are," Blaney said. "They're challenged to do a little more. They really appreciate that."

The camp also provides a respite for the caregivers at home. For some parents, it's their only time away from their child, Bunny said.

In addition to the camp, the Share Foundation also provides services to the deaf and hearing impaired, group homes for severely mentally disabled adults, sign language classes for Down Syndrome youngsters, respite care services for the caregivers of people with disabilities and elderly, and a group home for eight severely mentally disabled adults in Michigan City.

To expand their services, the Share Foundation bought 184 acres near Rolling Prairie, Ind. in 1991. The site, named Sharing Meadows, includes a stocked pond, berry bushes and an orchard of black walnut and pecan trees.

Eventually, 15 nurturing resi-

dences for 45 to 50 mentally disabled adults, a House of Affirmation conference center, year-round vacation cabins and a values retreat-summer camp will be built, as well as a large vegetable garden.

Three of the permanent houses, two storage sheds and the camp building's foundation have been erected.

To raise funds for the summer camp accommodations, which will be needed this summer, the Share Foundation is hosting an elegant dinner-dance on March 25.

"We want this to be the best and most successful dinner-dance this area has ever seen," said Lois Bobin, event chairwoman. "An ambitious task. It's our first dinner-dance."

A silent auction for a variety of donated items will be held.

The items include a 1995 Chevy Cavalier, donated by Christenson Chevrolet; a week in a three-bedroom condo at Beaver Creek Colorado; weekend packages; an autographed basketball from Bobby Knight; airline tickets; a Tiffany lamp; a Lladro and much more.

The Stanley Paul Orchestra from Chicago will perform.

"We (the Share Foundation) need name recognition," Bobin said. "We also need people, major corporations and individuals to underwrite some of the expenses for the dance."

These expenses include \$3,600 for the music, \$57 per table for decorations, \$5,000 for invitations and \$4,000 for printing.

While David is waiting for his week at camp, he's busy keeping the dining room clean at McDonald's in Munster, where he has worked for four years.

And just like camp, the people at McDonald's are the nicest part of the job, he said.

What: Share Foundation dinner-dance to benefit the mentally disabled.

When: 7 p.m. March 25

Where: The Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, Munster

Cost: \$100 per person

For more information: Call Claudia Pellar at 923-1255