

## Chapter Nine: Proms, Dances, Special Days, and Just Plain Fun!

Proms....

May 24,1993- "Dream River" at Happy Hearts Prom



*Two prom goers smile at the efforts of their classmates while enjoying a dance themselves at the Prom. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews*

“I started to get nervous this morning,” said Betty Pearson, mother of student Christina Pearson. “Just getting everything together and ready to go. I put the prom ticket in Christina’s new purse, but she took it out to put her makeup in and forgot to put the ticket back in. We were halfway here before we thought of it,” she said laughing. Seeing her daughter with her date, Bob Stewart, was a special moment for Pearson.

“I’m speechless,” she said. “Just the expression on her face says what it means to her.”

The theme was “Dream River.” The cafeteria was transformed by Conneaut High School students Rochelle McKiethan, Sarah McKiethan and Keith Sherman, who painted some of the backdrops for the evening.

Other student volunteers and Happy Hearts students helped, arranging donated theatrical scenery, including a Venetian gondola and gondolier.

“I love my tuxedo,” said prom goer Jeff Schultz who took Jennifer Aldrich to the prom. “I think the prom is great and everything is fun.”

## Sharing a Dance at the Prom-2001



*Ben Hoffman, a member of the Conneaut High School National Honor Society, and Melissa Meola share a dance at the Happy Hearts School prom, April 20, 2001.*

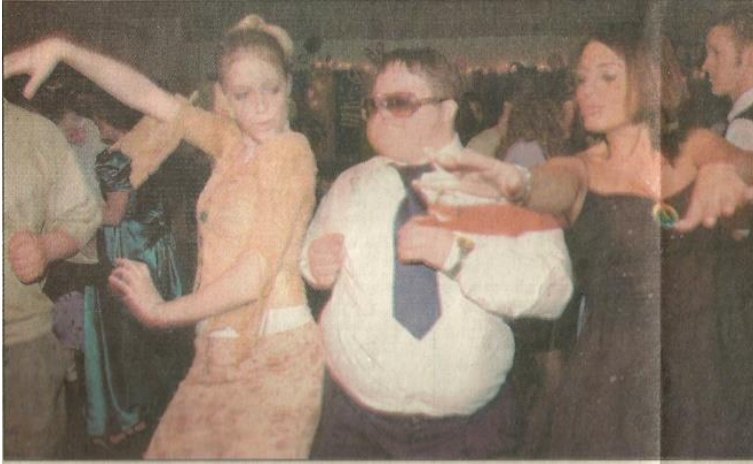
## Dancing with Mom at the Prom-2002

*Monday, April 29, 2002. Jason Winters enjoys a dance with his mother Janice during the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Happy Hearts Prom Friday night at Happy Hearts School. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



*April 29, 2002. Nicole Litnar, Alan Simpson (far right) Adam Henson and his date Katrina Miller (right) share dances during the Happy Hearts School Prom. Photo by Daniel Kraus of the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

## “Twisting the Night Away” at Happy Hearts Prom-2003



*David Baker (center) dances with Megan Mundi (left) and Barb Patchen during the Happy Hearts Prom on Friday, May 2, 2003.*

## Prom Queen and King, 2003



*Melissa Meola and Jamie Smock were crowned king and queen of the Happy Hearts Prom on May 2, 2003.*

*More than 50 people gathered in the cafeteria of Happy Hearts School for a night of fun. Some of the prom goers danced in their wheelchairs with a little help from their friends.*

*Part of the fun included hoola hoop contests, food, and learning new dances. Warren Dillaway took the photos for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

# “Wild, Wild West” at Happy Hearts Prom, 2005



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

# Prom Night

LEFT: TIFFANY MORDARSKI gives the thumbs up to her friends and parents, Marlene and Tom, after being crowned queen of the Happy Hearts Prom April 22. Tiffany, 21, will graduate in June and plans to work at Ash Craft Industries. She is a resident of Austinburg.

## ‘Wild, Wild West’ theme for Happy Hearts Prom

By CARL E. FEATHER  
Lifestyle Editor

**T**iffany Mordarski skipped lunch Friday. She was too excited to think about food. It was prom night.

“She hasn’t eaten all day,” said her mother, Marlene, last Friday evening. “She said she would eat at the prom.”

As it turned out, Tiffany was crowned queen of the 14th Annual Happy Hearts School Prom, and food took a back seat to the excitement of the moment. Tiffany, 21, had little to say about the honor, except that it was a surprise. But her screams of joy and the huge smile she wore as she danced with Prom King John Henson said it all.

With the possible exception of graduation, the prom is the most anticipated event of the academic year at the Route 84, Kingsville Township, school. “As soon as we come back to school in the fall, or even before then, if I see them at the fair, they talk about the prom,” said Amy Piotrowski, intermediate teacher and co-coordinator of the prom.

This is the fourth year Amy coordinated the event. She is assisted by Candy Fultz, who also works as her teacher’s assistant. They selected a theme of “Wild, Wild West” and decorated the school cafeteria to the hilt with bandanas, boot balloons, paper stockade fence, wagon wheels, saddles, bales of hay and other Western gear. Paper backdrops were made by school staff and students at Happy Hearts satellite locations – Braden Junior High, Lakeside and Geneva.

Staff and others who chaperoned the event wore western wear, and the students were encouraged to do the same.

Some, like Megan Bailey, 17, took a hybrid approach. She wore a pastel flower-print gown with a lavender cowboy hat.

“I come to the prom because I really love it,” she said. “I like to dance with my friends. They are my best friends.”

Hors d’oeuvres, cookies, snacks and cup-



LEFT: Lakeside Nine student Laura Hood and her sister Katty (center) dance with their cousin, Martha Runnion, a student at Happy Hearts’ Lakeside satellite school. RIGHT: Prom King John Henson and Queen Tiffany Mordarski dance following their crowning early in the evening of the 14th Annual Happy Hearts Prom at the school on Route 84 in Kingsville Township.

cakes were available for munching, but most students’ were focused on the dance floor from the moment they entered the room.

“They dance so much, they hardly eat,” said Sally Flash, a physical therapist at the school. “From the time the music starts until it stops, they dance.”

The prom is open to students age 13 and older who attend Happy Hearts or its satellite programs. Amy said about 25 students were signed up to attend Friday night’s event. Each student paid a \$3 cover charge for the night of entertainment, which included the DJ work of Mark Allen.

Parents stay until the king and queen are crowned, about 30 minutes into the evening, then allow their children to slip into a world of independence for two hours.



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

“Cindy and I look at the kids who are going to be graduating, and we try to give it to somebody who hasn’t had the opportunity to be king and queen yet, like at the Valentine’s Day dance,” said Amy Piotrowski, explaining how the royalty are selected.

The crowning of her daughter as queen was especially sweet for Marlene and her husband Tom. She said doctors had told them early in Tiffany’s life that she would never talk. Thanks to the instruction of Happy Hearts teachers and Tiffany’s hard work, she not only talks, but will graduate from the school in June.

“This is a wonderful school,” said Marlene Mordarski as she watched Tiffany and her cadre of friends disappear into the cafeteria and their enchanted evening.

**“We Danced the Night Away” at the Prom- 2007**



**2007 Prom**

*Forging relationships and fostering social skills*

*“We danced the night away!”  
-John Henson & Nicole Litnar*

*Special thanks to Conneaut High School for  
providing prom decorations and lending support.*

## “Paris” at Happy Hearts Prom-2008

*May 2, 2008. Dylan Wludyga was chosen Prom King and Katrina Miller as Prom Queen at the Happy Hearts 2008 Prom. This year’s theme was “Paris.”*



## “Dancing with the Stars”-2009

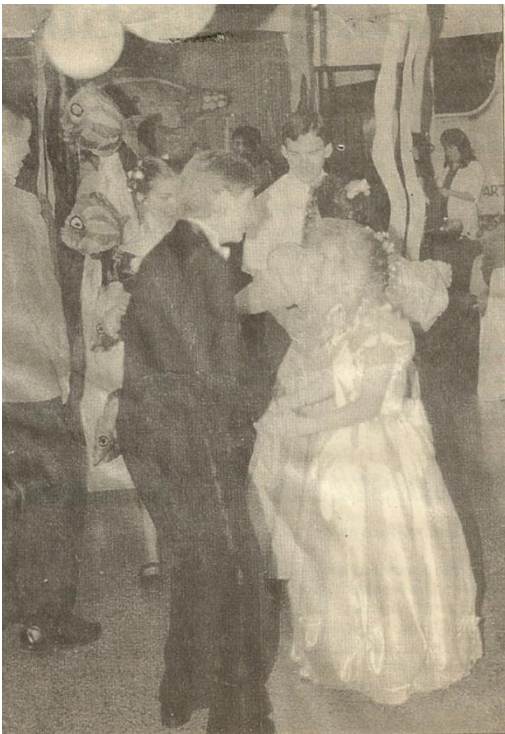


*Happy Hearts School Prom was held May 1, 2009, at the Geneva State Park Lodge and Conference Center. The highlight of the evening was the crowning of Prom King, Adam Henson, and Prom Queen, Megan Bailey. this year’s theme was “Dancing with the Stars.” Music was provided by Tom Lucas in the star-studded ball room. May 23, 2009.*

## “Oriental Nights” at Happy Hearts Prom-2010



*Happy Hearts School Prom took place on May 1, 2010, at the Geneva State Park Lodge and Conference Center. Craig Rankin and Betty May Mareno were crowned Prom King and Queen. This year's theme was "Oriental Nights." Mike and Nick DeMarino provided the music.*



## Happy Hearts Prom, Dancing, Food, and Nautical Decor

*Happy Hearts School in Kingsville Township celebrates its spring prom with dancing, food, and great nautical décor. Matt Mucci dances a slow song with date Lacey Johnston as the festivities continued into Friday night at the school. Conneaut High School donated prom decorations for the event and Presque Isle Trucking donated a semi-truck to transport the large amount of decorations. Jim Matthews took the Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*



*Liisa Nurkka and Ricarda Reynolds share a joke at the prom.*

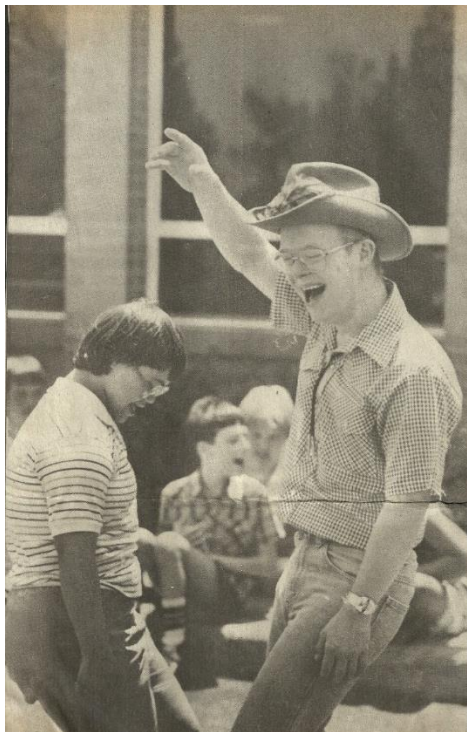


## Dancing



*Bunny Hopping in the 1970s.*

*These couples from Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School (left to right) Ron Cole and Audrey Thomas, Mary Licate and Jeff Spencer, Renee Jenner and Charles Lowery, Randy Hershey and Donna Zeller are in step for a good time on May 7, 1983. Tony Esposito's Band furnished music for the event. Photo by Vern Fuchs.*



*Robert Stewart of Andover enjoys a dance with Carrie Stowe of Geneva during a hoedown celebration that closed out the Happy Hearts Summer Program. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph.*



*The Committee for the St. Patrick's Day Dance (left to right) Loretta Meredyk, Bill Jenner, and Charles Thomas check out last minute details for the St. Patrick's Day dance. The event benefits Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft and will be held 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday at Grotto Hall. The Boss Band will provide live music. Tickets will be sold at the door.*



## **Sock hop keeps Ash/Craft Hoping into the night**

April 17, 2010. Bobby Stewart of Ashtabula and Tammy Hayes of Conneaut dance at the Ash/Craft Sock Hop Friday evening at Happy Hearts School.

Poodle skirts whisked through the air Friday night as dozens of people enjoyed an evening of dancing at the Ash/ Craft Industries' sock hop.

"This is our first sock hop," said Bonnie Roosa, who has worked as a bus driver for 18 years. She said she came up with the idea for the dance after attending a Conneaut Sock Hop at the Conneaut Human Resources Center.

While some Ash/ Craft Industries clients just watched the festivities, many danced to the tunes from the 1950s. Some of the guys took on the dress of teenagers from more than a half century ago, complete with white T-shirts and even a few (empty) cigarette packs in the sleeves.

The building's cafeteria became the dance floor, adjacent to open windows that reflected the early-evening sun. A disc jockey played a variety of tunes for dancing and, for some, reminiscing. Inez Gaumer, a board member for a support group for Happy Hearts and Ash/ Craft Industries, said the organization sponsors five dances a year and she thought the change of pace to a sock hop worked well.

"We are going to have a Hula-Hoop contest," Inez said of one of the attractions for the evening. She said there were also door prizes for the best costumes. "They've been talking about it all day. This place is packed," Bonnie Roosa said as people were arriving by bus, vans and cars.

## Special Days

### Halloween



Happy Hearts School students stage Halloween skits. Most sang and some played instruments after about six weeks of preparation.



Happy Hearts students presented a program of songs for the Halloween season for their parents and other school members. A party and a

dance later in the evening followed the program. November 3, 1976.



Students in Kathy Jasketa's class at Happy Hearts School built a BOOO-TIFUL Halloween haunted house that stands in the school lobby. Students Halloween builders are (seated from left) Todd Sloan; Walter Knightlinger; Joey Evans; Gary Adams; and Arnie McKeown. Inside the haunted house are (from left) Kim Prozdp Bob Stewart; and Jane Phipps. The students built, painted, and decorated the house with papier-mache figures. Photo by Pat Brink.

# Thanksgiving



*Food and Thought. The Thanksgiving holiday atmosphere is all over Ashtabula County, and Happy Hearts students are in the swing of it all. Kevin Ecklund dons his new pilgrim hat as he enjoys a tasty turkey and dressing dinner. November 24, 1988. Photo by Jim Matthews, Ashtabula Star Beacon*



*Happy Hearts School students and their adopted grandparents say grace before their Thanksgiving meal Tuesday. Betty Hartley's Intermediate Class began the program of adopting residents of the Ashtabula County Nursing Home located across the street from the school in the early fall of 1988. The seniors visit weekly for games and help with classwork. Joining the students were Jeanette Bates, second from left, Nellie Meyers, fourth from left, and Ruth Burke, third from right. In the back at right is class assistant Linda Walford. At right foreground is Marge Johnson who helps transport the seniors. Photo by Jeanne M. Hawkins, Jefferson Gazette. November 24, 1988*

# Christmas

## Santa Visits Happy Hearts

*United Commercial Travelers, Lake Shore Council 330, threw a Christmas party for Happy Hearts School on December 16, 1987, its 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive party for the school. Everyone sang Christmas carols and Santa brought a gift for everyone.*



*Santa gives Katrina Miller a gift and pat on the head at the annual Christmas party at Happy Hearts School on December 14<sup>th</sup>.*



*Jeremy Weber with help from Molly MacCarthy, tests out the gift that Santa Clause gave him, a new pair of suspenders.*

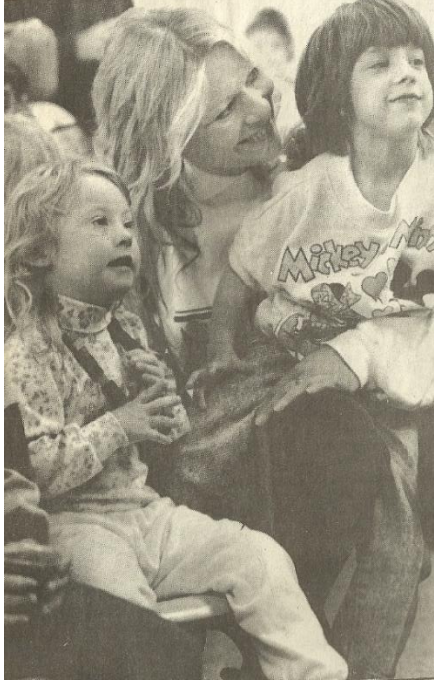




*Amy Kullowski receives a hug from Santa during the annual Christmas party at Happy Hearts School. Her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday coincided with the date of the party which was held on December 14, 1990.*



*Happy Hearts teacher Elissa Bundy shares a book about Christmas with Megan Bailey during the party at the December 14, 1990 Christmas party.*



*Waiting for Santa.*



*Visiting with Santa.*



The owners of Old Kings Tavern, North Kingsville, held a Christmas party for the children of Happy Hearts School and the Adult Services Workshop. Volunteers provided gifts and services. Happy Hearts administrator Dr. William Hall (standing, left) and volunteer William Johnston (standing right) look on as (seated from left) Harold Bowdler talks to Mathew Theiss and restaurant owner Mrs. Danny (Dolly) Rossi and Jodi Warren look for Santa to come. Mr. Bowdler provided fruit baskets for the children, and gifts were presented by the United Commercial Travelers.

## Happy Hearts Children Sing for Santa and Christmas



*Music teacher Michael DeMarino helped Happy Hearts students present Christmas programs for Santa and their families and friends during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s,*



*Students at Happy Hearts School presented a holiday music program entitled "A Christmas Gift," Tuesday. Participating are Theresa Spang; Joanna Stawicki; Mike DeMarino, music teacher; Melvin Mann, Christmas tree, Patty Crofoot and Lela Holcomb.*



*1970s. Marta Triozzi's preschool class performing "Christmas Bells."*



*The Orff Band playing Christmas music.*



*Against a Christmas backdrop, Music teacher Mike DeMarino sings with his students.*



*The Happy Hearts Choir sings at Christmas.*

## Carnivals...

Happy Hearts Sponsors Year End Carnival for Students, June 1988



*In June 1988, the Ashtabula Exchange Club sponsored a carnival at Happy Hearts School. The yearend event was a way to celebrate the end of the school year with rides, games, and a dance for all the students. Enjoying a spin on the Ferris wheel are Bob Stewart (left) and Frank Woodworth.*

## Fund Raising at the June 1991 Carnival



*Fundraiser. Happy Hearts School held a fundraising carnival in June 1991. Funds from the carnival will be donated to the upcoming Special Olympics. The photo is by Nick Jezierny in the Ashtabula County Sentinel, June 3, 1991.*



## Safety Town and Balloon Launch at Happy Hearts Carnival

June 6, 2003

*Happy Hearts children enjoyed face painting, music, and Safety Town at a carnival and balloon launch. Substitute teacher David Devine provided music for a sing-a-long in the gym and secretary Vicki Sylvester painted designs on the faces and arms of students. There were relay races and a baseball game and balloon lift off. Students sent red, white, and blue balloons with the names of their teachers and address of their school in the air, hoping for responses from people in faraway towns and cities. Teacher Cindy Osburn-Bucci said the carnival marked the end of the school year. Representatives from the Trivent Financial for Lutherans cooked a lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers for students and staff.*



## Just Plain (But Educational) Fun!



*Happy Hearts teacher James Kiser demonstrates for Trevor Lundgren (left) and Benjamin Sullivan how to create art with a straw paint, and a good set of lungs. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.*