

# Around the World at Sunday School

By Meghan Deans & Michelle Searles

On Sunday, December 22, students of the Lansing United Methodist Church took a trip — a trip around the world. Well, sort of. It was all part of LUMC's "Christmas Around the World" celebration. Each Sunday School class chose a country and set up a booth that displayed some of that country's traditions.

Countries represented by the celebration were Guatemala, Mexico, the United States, Haiti, Spain and Scandinavia. Every booth had some sort of craft or activity to teach students about the different cultures.

The Scandinavian booth featured cultural events that are found in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Kids made 'Christmas Crackers' that consisted of paper tubes filled with candy. The Guatemalan booth offered clay which could be fashioned into little animals to surround a manger scene.

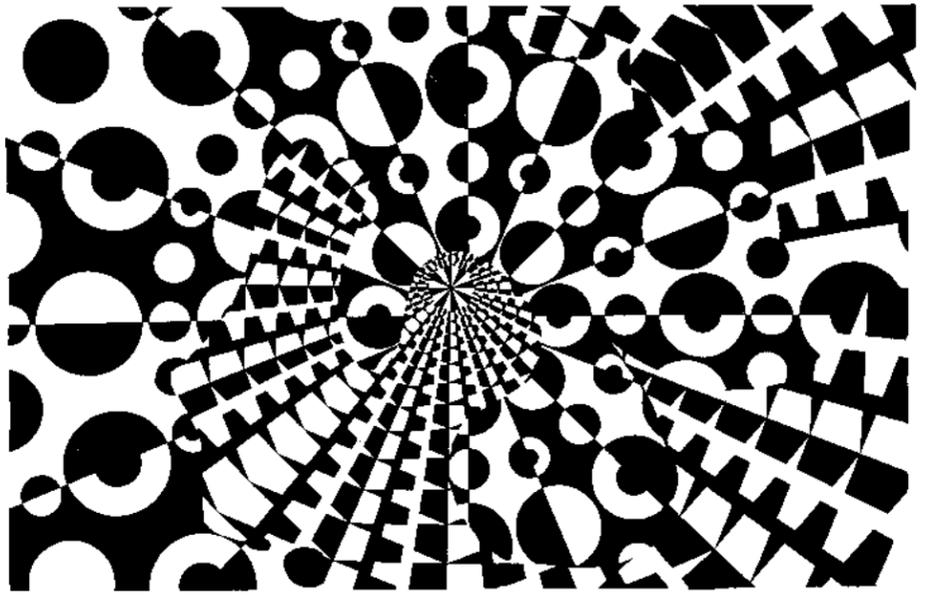
At the Haitian booth, people could make a traditional Haitian decoration called "fanals." These are paper churches lit by candles. At the Spanish booth, we learned about the legend of the three kings, who came on the eve of the Epiphany. In Spain, the wise men's coming is commemorated by filling children's shoes with gifts.

At the American booth, students made a paper chain and used it to decorate the church. And at the Mexican booth, each person ate a doughnut from a plaster-covered paper plate and then broke the plate for good luck in the new year.

Another display at the festival was a paper-mache Jesse Tree. The Jesse tree symbolizes the Old Testament, and traces Christ's origin and genealogy. Kids made ornaments symbolizing events in the Old Testament and hung them on the Jesse Tree's branches.

Everyone agreed that the festival was a lot of fun. Some even said they enjoyed it more than regular Sunday School. "I liked it," said 8th grade student Erika Eddy. "I think it's important so that all children and adults in the church can learn how people celebrate Christmas in other countries." Maybe Madeline Horrell put it best though. When asked if she was having fun, she said with a grin, "Yeah!"

Meghan Deans and Michelle Searles are in Mrs. Martin's ninth grade English class.



**ILLUSIONS CALENDAR** - Prepared by BOCES' commercial art class, the 1997 calendar features original work by Lansing junior Kristen Grey and other students. The \$9.50 calendar is available to Lansing Community News readers for only \$7.00; the proceeds fund special class activities such as field trips. For information, contact teacher Mary Richards at 257-1551.

## Late December Legislation Benefits Cayuga Heights Rescue Squad

Three local volunteer emergency services are among nearly a hundred advanced life support (ALS) providers that will be saved from a "legal nightmare" by legislation passed during a special session of the state Legislature, according to Senator James L. Seward, Chairman of the Senate Task Force on Volunteer Emergency Services.

When the Public Health Law regulating emergency care was changed in 1993, existing ALS providers were exempted from the complex and time-consuming process of getting a "certificate of need" from the state **IF** they could document their operation and existence prior to the 1993 law.

In the last three years, however, only 5 of New York's 90 ALS first responders have officially been "grandfathered." The others, including Cayuga Heights, Varna and McLean, have remained in "legal limbo," said Seward.

The Dec. 17 legislation allows these advanced life support first response units to continue operating.

"This bill extends the deadline for grandfathered units to get in their certification," said Seward. "It ensures continuation of ALS first responders and preserves emergency care in our rural areas."

## Local Credit Union & Banking Officials Calm National Rhetoric

Following a spate of legal maneuvering at the national, state and local levels (see history at right), Cornell Federal Credit Union and Tompkins County Trust Company officials made separate statements last week suggesting that, in Tompkins County at least, both sides are anxious to get back to the daily business of building the region's economy.

"As far as we can tell," said CFCU Director of Business Marketing and Development Elizabeth Rudan last Friday, "the bankers' real issue is taxation, not the right of people to join credit unions. Besides the fact that we're in the industry competing for customers, we're in the same community and often working on the same projects for the benefit of all."

Across town, Tompkins County Trust Company President Jim Byrnes recalled that the Trust Company had assisted the CFCU in its early days. While he believes that tax exempt credit unions shouldn't be full competitors with corporate taxpaying banks, "the controversy is not a local vendetta, but a national thing," he said.

Byrnes believes that the complicated legal and legislative maneuvering going on between the credit union movement and the bankers association represents each side's efforts to put its own views forward. All of this, he said, "will likely result in a national compromise with banks giving ground on credit union powers and the credit union movement giving ground on taxation." Of course, that's just one person's opinion, he added.

## Cooperative Extension Winter Crop Meeting

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County will be holding its annual winter crop meeting on Thursday, January 23 at the Triphammer Lodge and Conference Center, Sheraton Drive in the Village of Lansing from 10:00 am to 3:15 pm.

The program will include presentations on available local technologies for precision agriculture, new technologies in crop breeding, corn rootworm management practices, new corn herbicides and a research update on silage quality.

The program costs \$20 and registrations must be submitted by January 15. For additional information, contact the Cornell Cooperative Extension office in Ithaca at 272-9292 or in Cortland at 753-5077.

Front page coverage in the Dec. 19 Lansing Community News provided background information about court litigation between the American Bankers' Association (ABA) and the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA).

The ABA contends that the NCUA exceeded its 1934 legislative authority in permitting credit unions to expand their membership base beyond "core" memberships. The ABA maintains that this creates an unfair advantage for tax exempt credit unions.

The NCUA maintains that its 1982 policy allowing multiple groups to create "a common bond" is legal. They maintain that it is inconsistent for the ABA to seek broader interpretations of the 1936 law governing their operations while seeking to deny Federal Credit Unions a similar opportunity.

A nationwide October 25 injunction by the U.S. District Court ordered all credit unions to cease adding new "common bond" groups and to stop accepting new members from existing "common bond" groups. (The 45,000 member Cornell Federal Credit Union has about 105 "common bond" groups, called Select Employee Groups, or SEGs). Credit Unions stated their concern that this decision might eventually be extended and force them to expel current members.

The NCUA was joined by the US Justice Department in petitioning the United States Supreme Court to review the District Court's ruling. The Supreme Court is expected to decide by mid-January whether to grant the NCUA's petition.

Locally, the CFCU is making use of a 1996 change in the NYS Banking Law to convert its operation to a state charter. The members' 415-7 vote on Dec. 20 clears the way for the CFCU to move to a state charter.

Under a state charter, credit unions can retain all of the membership rights threatened by the federal injunction, retain their tax exempt status and have more flexibility in setting interest rates on loans.

Nationally, the NCUA petitioned the U.S. Court of Appeals to temporarily suspend the District Court's ruling until the Supreme Court either reaches a final decision or declines to review the case. On Dec. 24, the Court of Appeals agreed to a portion of the NCUA petition and granted a "partial stay" of the injunction.

Federal credit unions may once again take new members from existing "common bond" SEGs, but they may not add new "common bond" SEGs to their field of membership.

The ultimate fate of federal credit unions' rights to (a) tax exempt status, (b) accepting new "common bond" SEGs, and (c) maintaining their "once a member always a member" policy now lies with the willingness of the US Supreme Court to hear their arguments. If the Supreme Court agrees to hear the case, a final decision will likely come by June on whether the U.S. District Court decision was correct or should be overturned.

Because the court's eventual decision may affect nearly 50 Lansing-based "common bond" SEGs, the Lansing Community News will continue to follow the story.

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