

Pam in Portland
by Pamela Fry

We can all feel especially proud of one small citizen of Portland, Canada. As everybody must know by now, Michèl Sled, age nine, was chosen as "Tammy" for our local Easter Seal Campaign. Organized by Grant Armstrong Chairman of the Campaign, and a leading member of the Rotary Club of Smiths Falls, it covers nine villages and towns: Jasper, Frankville, Toledo, Portland, Newboro, Westport, Delta, Elgin and of course, Smiths Falls.

Why and how was Michèl chosen? In a moment I will tell you. But first I would like to say that the outstanding quality this sparkling little person possesses is courage. Courage and determination. Developing cerebral palsy when she was two months old, she has literally fought it every inch of the way. Her attitude to life is perhaps best expressed by an exchange she had with a school-fellow when she was five.

She was climbing onto the school bus.

"What's your problem, Michèl?" shouted another playmate, with that unconscious cruelty of which children are sometimes capable.

"I don't have a problem," Michèl told him. "You do."

In those two sentences she expressed her whole philosophy of life. From the moment she was old enough to decide what she wanted to do - she went ahead and did it.

She did not even begin to walk until she was three. (Before that she had crawled everywhere.) Learning to walk was not easy. For quite a while it had more to do with falling: up and down stairs; outside on the grass or the more painful gravel of the roads. It was almost equally agonizing for her parents, who had to watch, and train themselves not to rush and pick her up everytime she fell. Because they knew they must support the faith she had in herself.

And she did it. Her doctor, who is Dr. W.J. McIntyre of the Ottawa Crippled Children's Treatment Center, feels that she has succeeded beyond his wildest expectations. She walks and runs, skates, swims and goes cross-country skiing. She also loves to dance. She still wears braces to bed at night, and does daily therapy at school and with her mother. During the next few years she will need a series of new braces and castings. Eventually, there will be several operations to stretch her tendons, once she is almost fully grown. But all that lies in the future, a problem to be coped with when the time comes. In the meantime, she enjoys every aspect of her busy existence: school life, music, reading, playing, watching TV.

So how did the Easter Seal Society discover this remarkable little person? Well, amongst its many worthwhile activities, the Society owns



and operates five summer camps. Last year, Michèl went to Camp Merrywood, on Big Rideau Lake. She loved it. In her own joyful, unselfconscious fashion she entered into the spirit of everything, took part in all the camp activities. Once the camp ended, Nurse Nesta Wiskins from Kingston called Mr. Armstrong.

"Do I ever have a Tammy for you!" she told him.

Thus began Michèl's March career as Tammy, public representative of the Easter Seal Campaign. The first event was a Rotary Club luncheon in Smiths Falls, where she met the Mayor. The whole family was invited, Tom and Joanne, as well as Michèl's twelve-year-old brother, Patrick. "Both the children were marvellously good," says Joanne with a slight note of relief in her voice. Michèl, obviously lived up to her professional obligations: the Mayor congratulated her on her poise.

An amusing incident occurred when the Mayor presented Michèl with ten dollars, as his contribution to the campaign. She was asked to give it to the Club Treasurer, but this did not please her. Instead, she insisted, it should be given to Mr. Armstrong.

Then came an interview, conducted at her home in Portland, by Celina Tuttle of the Westport Mirror.

Miss Tuttle wrote a delightful story about Michèl, which appeared in the Mirror of March 2nd. Amongst other things, Michèl took her for a walk in the woods.

The big climax was Superthon '88, which took place in Kingston on TV Station Cablenet 13, on March 6th. Various disabled children and their parents were interviewed, while people phoned in pledges of money. Michèl appeared on screen five times, once with Tom and Joanne. She talked about Merrywood Camp and how she looks forward to going there again. Joanne explained that the family's initial contact with the Easter Seal Society had come in 1986, when Michèl needed yet another pair of braces for her legs. (They cost \$800, and Easter Seal paid the whole shot.) It was after that the Sleds found out about the camp, and Michèl went there for the first time in '87. "We feel greatly indebted to Easter Seal," Tom said. And Michèl, very much carried away by the spirit of the moment, added solemnly, "Easter Seal makes me proud to help people."

A final accolade came in the form of a congratulatory note from Jennifer Cossitt, M.P., who had read and enjoyed the story in the Mirror.

I would like to add a bit more about this remarkable Society.

It was formed in 1922, thanks to the initiative of ten Rotary Clubs in South Western Ontario. Today, there are altogether 228 Easter Seal Service Clubs across Ontario (including Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Kinsmen and others.) More than 7,000 children are helped by the Society in this province. It is one of the largest and most independent children's charities of its kind in Canada. This year, it will receive less than 4% of its funding from government sources. Its provincial objective is \$4,200,000.

The most important fact to emphasize is that any money donated by us to Easter Seal Campaign will STAY, right here, in our own community.

Since Michèl Sled is a special friend of mine, I would like to close with a small personal anecdote. During the summer, Michèl often brings me tiny offerings of wild flowers and ferns, and anything else she thinks might appeal to me. When these gifts arrive, they are always put into a silver egg cup, placed on my coffee table, and much admired by us both. One evening, after I had been away for several days, I arrived home. And there, thrust into my keyhole, was a bird's feather. Bird feather? For a moment I was bewildered. Then I thought, "Of course, Michèl." And so it was.



The Beauty Box Salon

Ear Piercing
Eyebrow Shaping

"Always a Friendly Atmosphere"

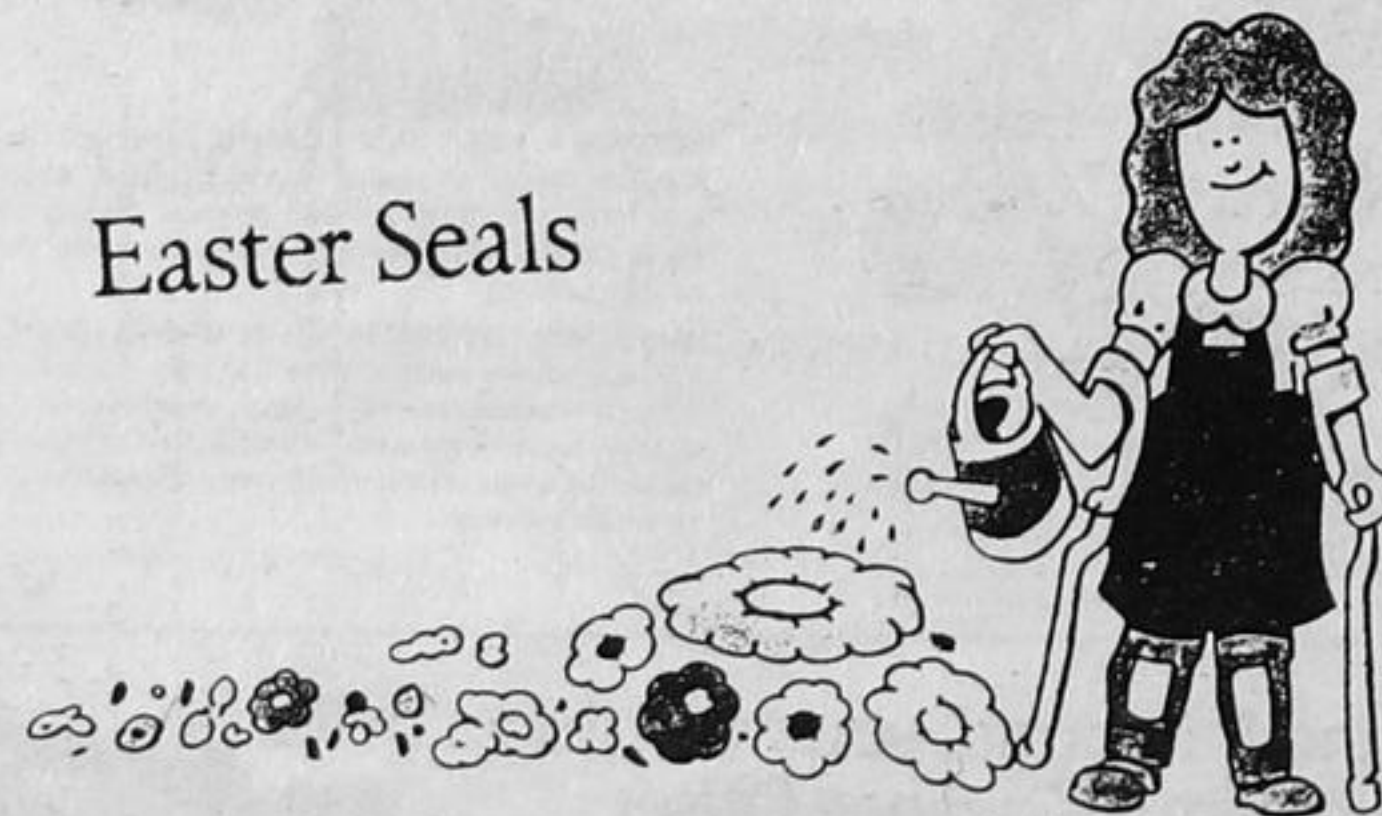


Prop, Myra Murphy

Seeley's Bay, Ontario
387-3626

CUT & STYLE \$10.00
WITH THIS ADVERTISEMENT

Easter Seals



JOYCE'S PLACE

YARNS & CRAFTS
VIANA YARNS - 25% OFF
NOW HAVE
PATON'S YARNS
&
BERNAT YARNS

BOND KNITTING FRAMES
Custom Knitting, Sewing
& Alterations.

REASONABLE RATES

Seeley's Bay (613) 387-3661