

# Davis play celebrates differences

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Ann Ringwood/staff photographer

"Helen Keller" shows her extreme frustration and fear as a child in a dark, silent world by clutching her doll "Nancy". Sheryl Faye gave a program on Helen Keller at Davis School in Bedford as part of the Celebrating Differences program.

By Ben Aaronson GateHouse Media Posted Feb 21, 2007 @ 01:31 PM

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emotionally intense moments. After the show, Griffith said she was amazed at how respectful and attentive most of the kids were.

"I was very impressed. There were times when they could have laughed, but you could tell they weren't sure if they should. They were very respectful," Griffith said.

Davis School Principal Jenny Brown said the school strives to teach students about respecting others, especially those who are different.

"We talk about being respectful and tolerating differences every day. I'm proud of their reactions. Their faces were so intent — you could see they were trying to find the meaning," Brown said.

Before the performance, Griffith introduced the star of the show.

"This is the story of how Helen Keller dealt with her disabilities and went on to lead a very happy and fulfilled life," Griffith told students in the audience.

Faye entered in character, holding onto Brown's arm for guidance as she approached the front of the room. When Faye addressed her audience, her voice was not her own but Keller's, who was deaf, blind and mute. Faye felt around objects laid out on a table before her fingers settled on the play button of a tape recorder. The recorded voice narrated Keller's life while Faye acted it out for the children.

Born in 1880, Keller was a healthy baby until at age 1 1/2 she got sick, running a high fever. Keller survived the illness, but not before she had lost both her sight and her hearing. Her parents would later realize she could not speak normally either.

"I was to live in a world of silence and darkness forever. I knew I was different from others. Nothing I did made me like everyone else," Faye told the audience.

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said.

Faye and the narrator also told the children the story of Keller's first love, a man named Peter Fagan who had been hired to help her write a book about her life.

"That's gross!" one girl said as others laughed upon hearing about the couple's first kiss.

While the beauty of true love may have been lost on the young audience, the children seemed impressed to learn that Keller had written 12 books.

Faye concluded her performance by teaching the students a few words in sign language and then reaching out her hands to say hi to those in the front row.

"If you ever meet a blind or deaf person, don't be afraid to say hi," she said.

After walking out to applause, with Brown again on her arm, Faye finally broke character and returned to the stage to answer questions from the audience.

As the students lined up to return to their classrooms, Faye waited at the door to greet them, holding out a Braille book for them to touch. Meanwhile, teachers and parents handed out cards with the Braille alphabet that were donated by the Perkins School for the Blind.



Ann Ringwood/staff photographer

As the Davis School students leave Sheryl Faye's program on Helen Keller, they were given a chance to feel a braille book. The program was part of the Celebrating Differences program. From the back left-Aleia McWalter, Andrew Barck, Amani Valentine, Caitlin Barr, Evan Flender and John Dunn.