

Waiting For Santa

Fifteen-month-old Rebecca Sidelinger of Ocean Isle Beach gets a boost from the Rev. George Speake of Shallotte as they enjoy the town's annual Christmas parade up Main Street.



Dancers On Parade

Students of The Dance Connection help kick off the holiday season with a float in the Shallotte Christmas parade.

UNITED WAY ADDS 800 LINE

Toll-Free Number To Put Information Within Easier Reach

BY SUSAN USHER

Starting Jan. 1, information on community agencies and support groups in a three-county area will be available with a toll-free call to Cape Fear Area United Way in Wilmington.

The agency's information and referral program is getting a new telephone number—1-800-284-2121—as well as a new name, First Call For Help. That is the name now used by most United Way information services nationwide.

"United Way serves Brunswick, Pender and New Hanover counties," said Elizabeth Garzarelli, community resources director. "We'd like our First Call For Help to serve all three

counties as well."

"A lot of agencies located in Wilmington serve a three- or five-county area," said Garzarelli. The new number is expected to make those agencies easier for local residents to locate.

In past years the referral program served Brunswick County residents on a limited basis, since using it required a toll call from all but the Leland area.

Information and referral (I&R) services attempt to link callers with agencies or support groups that meet human needs, such as food, clothing, medical care, emergency transportation or shelter, spiritual support, education and recreation.

Many Brunswick County residents use the I&R service offered by the Brunswick Volunteer and Information Center (VIC) in Supply, 754-4766, a toll call from both the Leland and Southport-Oak Island areas.

It is uncertain what effect First Call will have on the local service. VIC receives United Way funding for two of its nine services, emergency food and clothing, but not for I&R. United Way has not approached VIC about sharing information or possible duplication of effort.

"We're in the state of hoping they do well. I really don't have any feeling for it," said VIC Director Pete

Barnette Monday, two weeks before First Call goes into operation. "At this point we're getting the same calls we've always gotten."

He said he thinks many people are likely to continue calling VIC because it is local.

Barnette said he learned of First Call and its new 800 number through the United Way newsletter. "That has to be an asset to have that 800 number," he said.

Garzarelli said she expects First Call to pass referrals to VIC when it cannot answer a question about a local service, and to continue receiving similar referrals from VIC.

Cape Fear United Way will publish a Community Resources Direc-

tory in January that includes agency and support group listings for all three counties in its service areas, she said. These are the same groups that First Call telephone volunteers will be referring callers to.

All known service providers in all three counties were contacted earlier

and most have returned questionnaires. However, Garzarelli said that it is not too late to be included in the directory and First Call referral system. Any agencies or organizations that provide human services have not been contacted need to contact her before Jan. 1 at 910-251-5031.

Satellite Brings Choice To Area Viewers

The Dec. 17 launching of the nation's first direct broadcast satellite (DBS) marks "a new era of television choice and technology for rural Americans," according to David J. Batten, general manager of Brunswick Electric Membership Corp.

Starting in April, DBS will beam approximately 70 channels of digital television into homes across the country using an 18-inch satellite dish system. Receiver dishes and equipment manufactured by Thomson Consumer Electronics, which makes RCA brand products, will be available from dealers around mid-year. Programming service will be available through Brunswick EMC, one of the 798 rur-

al electric and telephone systems in the U.S. that jointly own the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC).

Batten is a member of the board and past president of NRTC, a non-profit corporation formed in 1986 to support the media and telecommunications needs of the 25 million consumers who live in rural America.

The DBS-1 satellite launched Dec. 17 by Arianespace is the first of two Direct Broadcast Satellites to be used for the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative-Hughes Communications DBS project. It was launched from the Ariane launch facility in Kourou, French Guiana, South America.



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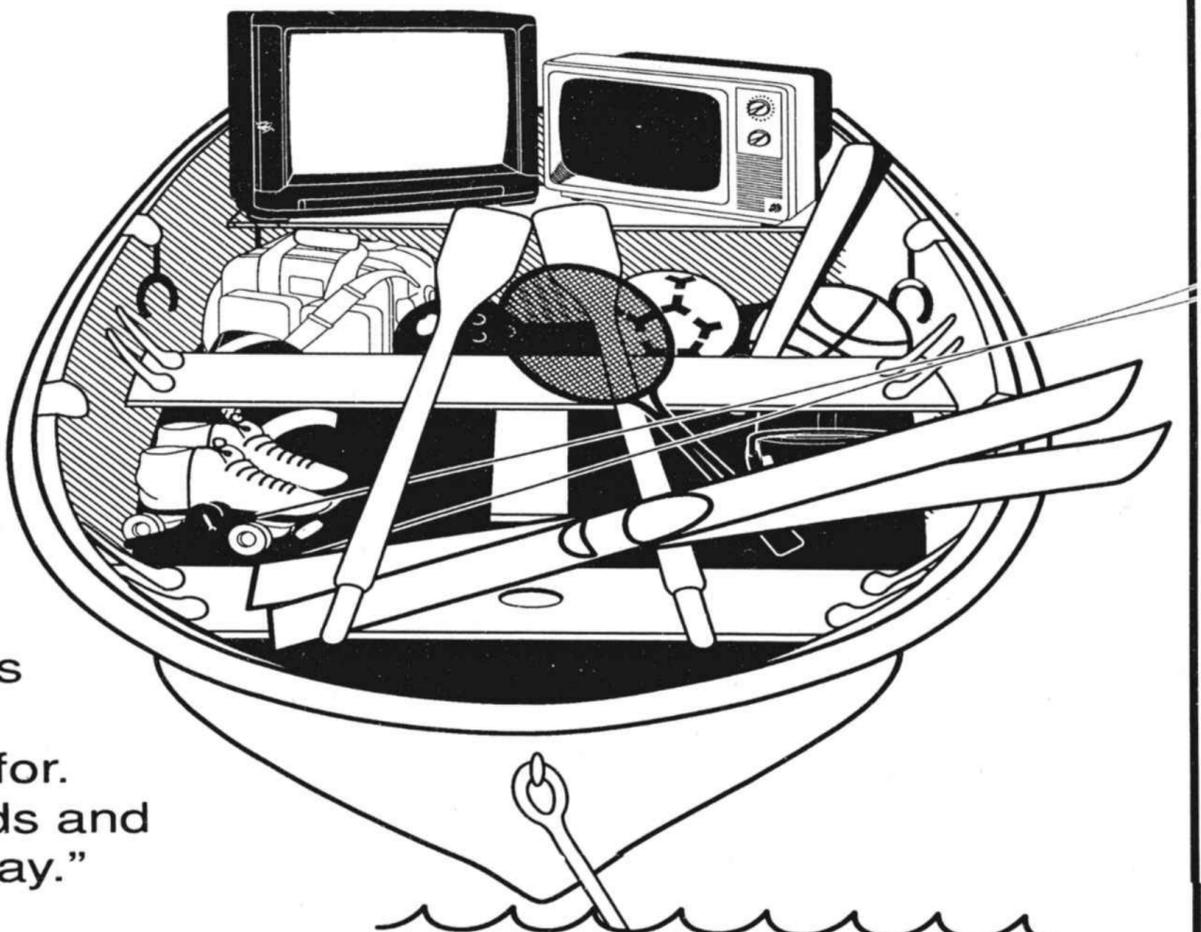
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