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Mother of 11 Handicapped Children Cited as Outstanding Woman

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NEWS RELEASE

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MOTHER OF 11 HANDICAPPED CHILDREN
CITED AS OUTSTANDING WOMAN

Rachel Wheeler Rossow, mother of 11 handicapped children, was cited as an outstanding woman by her alma mater, The Newport College - Salve Regina, and the state of Rhode Island during Alumni Weekend at the College May 18, 1980 in Newport, RI.

Mrs. Rossow and her husband, Carl, who reside in Ellington, Connecticut, are parents of three biological and 11 multi-handicapped adopted or permanently placed foster children. In 1974 a nonprofit corporation, Alpha and Omega, was founded by the Rossows to help them provide specialized nursing care and supervision in a family setting for handicapped children.

As first recipient of The Newport College's Outstanding Alumni Award, Mrs. Rossow was cited for "bringing love and beauty out of suffering," and for being "a living example of the College's aim to develop Christian men and women dedicated to the service

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of others."

In a citation from the state of Rhode Island, Mrs. Rossow was commended for her "life-long commitment to improving the quality of life for handicapped children."

She is a 1960 graduate of The Newport College and holds a B.S. in nursing. Her background also includes a master of science degree in psychiatric mental-health nursing from Catholic University. In 1977 she served as a Connecticut delegate to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals. She currently serves as a member of the Connecticut Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, and the Advisory and Planning Council for Tolland Region, The Ellington Community Health Commission, and the Open Door Society of Connecticut.

The Rossows believe every child has a right to acceptance, trust, love, stability and a family. And every child has a right to actualize his or her fullest potential. Only in a family environment together with professional care can the handicapped child attain a basic sense of trust upon which all other skills are dependent.

Mrs. Rossow describes her experience with the children as total, i.e., "sharing as a parent their hopes, joys, aspirations and sorrows, providing care for their physical needs and helping them to develop daily living skills." She feels what's most important is to help the multi-handicapped child attain a positive self-image, confidence in his or her own ability, and a sensitivity so that he or she can reach out to others.