

Exeter GFWC Woman's Club Arbor Day baby celebration
By Leesa K. Bartu

The Exeter Federated Woman's Club held their 23rd Annual Arbor Day Program, "A Tree for Each New Baby" on April 25th at 10:00 a.m. in the fellowship room of the UCC Church.

Five babies were welcomed to the community this year by the Woman's Club. After a welcome by Arbor Day committee member Bethine Leif, Chairman of the Exeter Village Board, Alan Michl, read a proclamation from the village. He reminded the group that "trees are a source of joy and spiritual renewal."

Next on the agenda was Exeter-Milligan Superintendent, Dr. Tom Sharp. He welcomed the babies on behalf of the school district. He encouraged the new parents to contact the school if they see "any delays in their child's development, and speech problems, vision . . . we are offering lots of services. If it's a concern to you, you should share it with the school. If you need help just ask."

Dr. Sharp spoke both to the families of the babies and the members of the Women's Club as he shared "the most important thing you can do is pray for these kids. Kids need prayer cover and need guidance to behave morally. Take the challenge to pray for them."

Judy Dinneen, current president of the Woman's Club spoke on the origins of the Arbor Day celebration in 1985 and how it has evolved. She noted past and recent resources for the club to be able to purchase the trees and gifts for the families. They began giving the trees to the families so "the parents could nurture and watch both the tree and the children grow," according to Dinneen,

Following this welcome, Woman's Club member Suzanne Johnson spoke on the origin of Arbor Day and tree planting. She described the important role that J. Sterling Morgan played in establishing this holiday and how "Arbor Day is the one holiday that proposes on the future instead of celebrating a past event."

The Exeter-Milligan second grade class presented a program about Arbor Day and tree celebrations with their teacher Mrs. Weber. They also sang a song about trees for the group. They were each presented with a tree and a treat.

Unfortunately, Fillmore County Good Beginnings director, Jill Schmidt, was not able to give a presentation on the WHALE program but will be sending packets out explaining the program to families soon.

Bethine Leif then introduced the new babies and their families and presented their trees, books, proclamations and gifts to them and flowers to their mothers. The new families and babies posed for pictures before leaving. The new babies are Jonah Jay Geiger, son of Jay and Diane Geiger, born September 14, 2007; Kiley Lynn Oldehoeft, daughter of Jason and Jill Oldehoeft, born September 13, 2007; Avery Jon Nichols, son of Jon and Stefanie Nichols, born February 19, 2008; Emma Janae Christensen, daughter of Nathan Christensen and Tela Santos, born February 29, 2008 and Brett Wilfrid Kallhoff, son of Dan and Elizabeth Kallhoff, born April 9, 2008.

This year, and for many years, Marilyn Manning, Bethine Leif and Suzanne Johnson have served as the committee for the Exeter GFWC Woman's Club Arbor Day baby celebration.