

## Families created the Worthington Crippled Children's School

by [Luther Granquist](#) // October 10th, 2010



In the early 1950s, many children with physical disabilities were denied education in the public schools. Parents also lacked in-home support services and, often, any way to pay for needed therapies. At that time there were “hospital-schools” for “crippled” children in Illinois, Iowa, and the Dakotas. Although there were special schools for these children in metropolitan areas, the Easter Seals News for December 1952 reported that parents in the Twin Cities still sought that type of hospital-school.

Children with physical disabilities and their parents had fewer options in rural areas. In Worthington, Eugene Wing, a businessman with a child with a disability who attended the Crippled Children's School in Jamestown, N.D., determined that there were approximately 60 seriously handicapped children who needed education and treatment in the surrounding 12-county area. Wing eyed the buildings and grounds of the shuttered Southwestern Minnesota Sanatorium on Lake Okabena for a hospital-school.

A multi-county commission operated the sanatorium, which had opened in 1917. As the number of tuberculosis patients decreased, an interim legislative committee recommended closing the facility. In January 1955, Wing and representatives of the Minnesota Society for Crippled Children and Adults proposed to the sanatorium commission that the buildings be converted to a crippled children's hospital, a proposal the commission didn't adopt at the time. Wing then spearheaded formation of a non-profit corporation, Crippled Children's School, Inc. When the sanatorium ultimately closed in 1957, the commission sold it to the new corporation.

Wing chaired the campaign to raise funds to renovate the old buildings. One of the fundraising brochures emphasized that there were no boarding schools for these children in Minnesota, the children needed special physical training, and for those reasons the public schools weren't the answer. But the public schools had to be involved, for state policy required that the Worthington Public Schools provide special education services. These special education services, unfortunately, were limited to “educable” children, those with an IQ above 50, because state law didn't require school districts to serve “trainable” children. Nevertheless, the school served many children with physical disabilities both from the surrounding counties and from throughout the state.

The Worthington Crippled Children's School, later named the Lakeview School, operated from 1958 until 1996. In the latter years the number of children with physical disabilities decreased, in large part because of

changes in federal law. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act required access to public schools programs. The Educational of All Handicapped Children Act (now IDEA) included a requirement for related services. Increased access to Medical Assistance enabled parents to obtain in-home support, PCA services, and therapy services without having to place their children away from home in a boarding school.

A Study of Orthopedically Handicapped Children in Southwestern Minnesota done by the Minnesota Department of Education is included in With an Eye to the Past on the Developmental Disability Council website at [www.mnddc.org/past/pdf/50s/58/58SOHDEPTED.pdf](http://www.mnddc.org/past/pdf/50s/58/58SOHDEPTED.pdf)

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