

Estelle Condra breaks new ground in performance art



By Jason Reagan
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Estelle Condra: actress, writer, director and daughter-in-law of Glade resident Norma Condra

Many Glade residents have children that have accomplished great things in this world—from entertainment to politics to athletics. For resident Norma Condra, seeing her daughter-in-law Estelle perform brings a maternal-like smile to her face. Not simply because Estelle is the wife of her son David and not just because she is a noted actress, writer, director and storyteller. All of these accomplishments, though laudable, pale next to the simple fact that Estelle Condra has been blind since the age of four.

Caused by a condition known as retinitis pigmen-

tosa, Ms. Condra's condition hasn't stopped her from accomplishing goals that few in the theater ever reach. Most recently, she wrote and played the lead role in "Vibrations of Laughter," a play portraying the life of Annie Sullivan, famed teacher of Helen Keller.

A native of Johannesburg, South Africa, Ms. Condra attended a private performing arts high school as well as London's Toynbee Theater School. It was in South Africa where she met Nashville native David Condra, owner of Delcon Computer Systems. The two were married and moved to Tennessee in 1973.

In addition to "Vibrations of Laughter," Ms. Condra has written "Caged" (which she performed at the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta), the comedy routine "Blind People Shouldn't Vacuum" and has authored an award-winning children's book "See the Ocean." Drawing from the culture of her native land, Ms. Condra performs storytelling shows using authentic African artifacts, dances and rituals.

As if all of this wouldn't keep most people unbelievably busy, she is also co-owner of Imagination Crossroads, a Nashville toy store and teaches children to think creatively at her Imagination Station studio.

As far as leisure activities, when she has time Ms. Con-

dra enjoys snow skiing and most recently, she and her husband together climbed Mount LeConte.

Despite this seemingly endless stream of activity, Ms. Condra stays involved with several charitable and cultural concerns, including the Tennessee Society to Prevent Blindness and the National Institute for the Arts.

So, as the story of Glade families continue to be told, the accomplishments of Estelle Condra will be weaved into this tapestry that forms Fairfield Glade.