

Teacher a woman of vision

People who marvel at Estelle Condra's ability to bring a story to life on stage have been heard to remark: "I don't see how she does it!"

Neither does she.

Although the acclaimed story performer can make her audience "see" a colorful world filled with



FROM THE HEART

Ruth Ann Leach

Swing For Sight. Noon to 6 p.m. today, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. Elmington Park, located on West End Avenue in front of West End Middle School. One shot for \$1. Grand prize: one year's lease on a 1990 Jeep Cherokee or \$2,500 cash from Hallmark Jeep/Eagle. Sponsored by the *Nashville Banner*. Proceeds benefit the Tennessee Society to Prevent Blindness. 352-0460.

engaging characters, Estelle's eyesight is severely impaired.

But she's only losing her *sight*. Her vision remains undimmed.

"All it means is that I have to find creative ways of solving problems," she says.

She has retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disease.

"I've been gnawing at this problem since I was 4 years old, but I have always felt that I will *not* buckle under. Sure, there's a problem, but I will not let it interfere," she states resolutely.

"I do whatever I want to do — I water ski, I snow ski." She stops herself.

"Oh, there is *one* thing I don't do," she admits. "I don't drive."

Unless you count the way she drives her students to excel.

Estelle directs the "The Imagination Station," a Nashville studio where young people dive headlong into the adventure of developing their creative abilities.

"Of course, I teach dramatics," Estelle says. "But more than that, I help my students to think imaginatively. We work on memory and concentration skills. We do visualization.

"What I try to do," she enthuses, "is teach them how to use their brains to *create*."

Her own creative approach to life inspires the students, who are as young as 5 and as old as 16.

"When I need to see their faces, to see how they're performing, I use a monocular. It's like binoculars, but just *one*," Estelle explains.

"People who see my story per-

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