

Volunteers help brighten minds of elderly citizens

By MEERA SRINIVAS
Staff Writer

Reading is an important part of our daily lives. We have to read signs when we drive, applications to apply for jobs and papers to keep up with current events. But what if you can't read or aren't able to read because of problems related to old age?

Sharing Time with Seniors, a unique new program, began this semester as part of Campus Coalition for Literacy and has already attracted a dedicated group. Volunteers for the program go to senior care centers to spend time with the seniors and read to them from newspapers or books.

"Many old people feel that as young people, we do not care much about them," Erica Benson, the group's chairperson said. "This is our way of showing them that we do."

The volunteers started the program with a small quiz from the director of the Palmetto Care Center in Shandon which was designed to dispel long-held myths about the elderly. Volunteers then broke off into groups of three or four people to read and talk to residents at the center.

"It's very exciting, especially when you see their faces brighten up when they see you," Benson said. "They are all very sharp and alert. In the time I have spent with them, I realized that there is so much to learn from them."

Barbara Rollins, director of the center, echoed Benson's sentiments. "The program has made such a dif-

ference to this place," Rollins said. "Usually the residents would have gotten to see some faces, now they see new faces and are so excited about it. I am thrilled to death."

"Usually a staff member would read to a group of 30, but now, with the students coming in, they can be divided and more personal attention can be given to the readings," Rollins added.

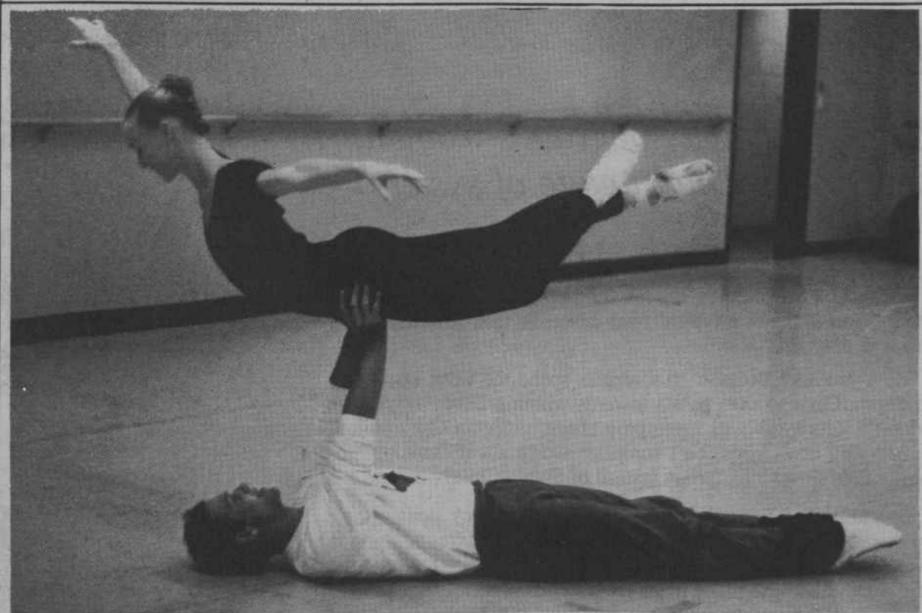
Benson said volunteers have been flooded with requests to hear certain readings. "Some ask for us to read something very specific like, 'Read about Redd Foxx or the humor section of the Reader's Digest,'" Benson said. "Many a time we are frantic to get the material."

Because of the numerous requests, the group plans to start a book drive to build a small library of their own. There are also future plans to expand both the number of volunteers and the number of centers they are visiting.

"I think that we are the first university to form a student organization to do such volunteer service," Benson said.

The Campus Coalition for Literacy sponsors various literacy programs for tutoring adults, reading to children, training persons interested in teaching someone to write and reading to the blind. It is committed to addressing literacy issues at all levels. It also serves as a link between the community and campus so that service initiatives are fostered.

Anyone interested in joining Sharing Time with Seniors can contact the Campus Coalition for Literacy.



Renee Meyer/The Gamecock

Susan Kress and Peter Kozak rehearse "Pas de Deux" from *Romeo and Juliet*. They are part of the USC Dance Company which will be showcasing a variety of dance styles during their annual fall dance concert from December 5-7 at Drayton Hall Theatre. Each night's performance begins at 8 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at the Longstreet box office or by calling 777-2551 or 777-2552. Tickets are \$9 for general public, \$8 for faculty, staff, senior citizens and military personnel and \$5 for students.

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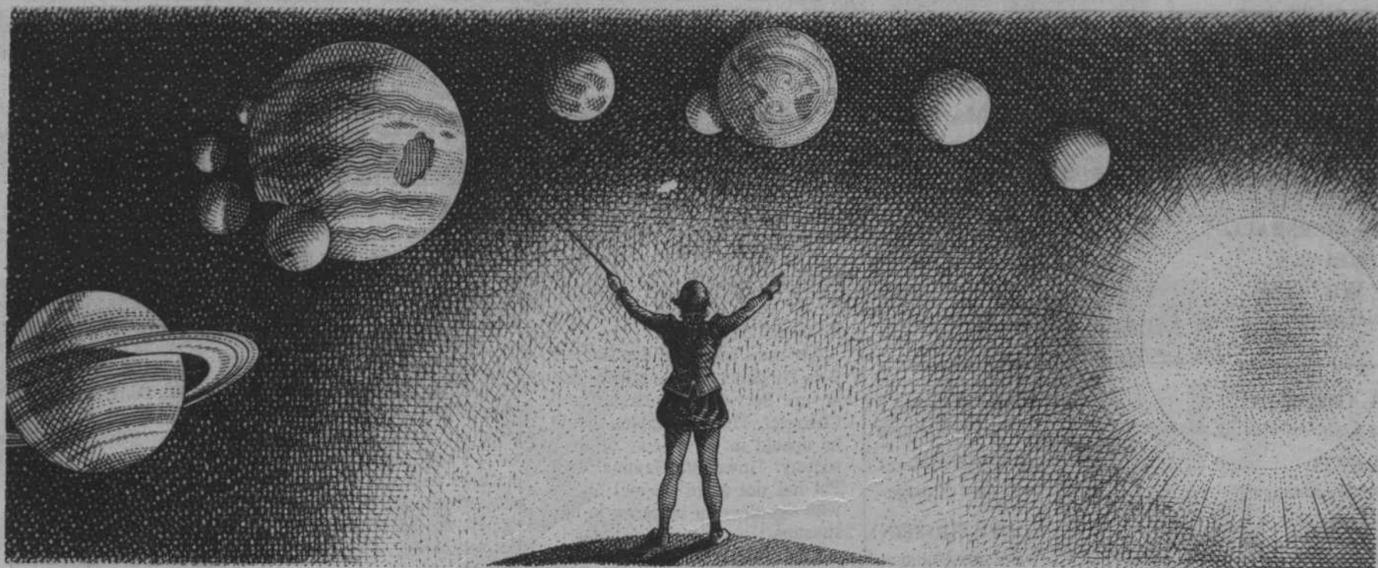
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