

THE CLIFFORD QUADS: FOUR TIMES THE FUN!

"The biggest challenge is giving each of them enough time. I'm constantly looking at all four babies and thinking, 'I want to hold all of you at one time,'" said Cheryl Clifford, 49, mother of 17-month-old quadruplets, Ruth, Paul, Heidi and Robert. "When you walk through the door, they all reach for you at once. When you're holding one, three other little sets of arms are tugging at your pant leg."

But luckily for Cheryl and her husband, Steve, there have been many eager helpers who adore the Clifford quads of Jackson Township as much as they do. This includes grandma, Gertrude Kuchta, and dozens of volunteers from the community and First United Church of Christ in Canton, where Cheryl is a Christian education director.

"The whole process of bathing and dressing the babies can take up to one hour," said Cheryl who, like her husband, is an ordained minister.

"In a way we are blessed because we know we can't cope with it all ourselves, and so the whole community has become part of our family," said Steve, 43, who owns his

own tax and accounting business.

The Cliffords are adamant about raising each baby as an individual. They knew right from the moment of delivery at Summa's Akron City Hospital that each quad had a unique personality. Firstborn, Ruth, is the "determined spitfire, who stands at the foot of her bed and barks orders at everyone else in the morning."

"But she has wisdom and understanding far beyond her age," said her mother.

Heidi is known as the "Baby Baby," a chubby, wide-eyed sweetheart. She is happy-go-lucky most of the time, but is known to cry "if she doesn't get her way."

Paul is the "clown," or "Daddy's Boy," and the most affectionate. "Paul has been a snuggler right from the beginning," said Cheryl. "He drives the others crazy by trying to hug them too much."

Robert is the "shy, studious type" who was last to crawl and roll over,

because it seemed he just didn't want to be bothered with such routine events. At 13 months, he sat down and stacked blocks five high, no easy task for a child that age.

A typical morning at the Clifford house begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast. The quad playroom (a converted dining room) has no furniture or electrical cords, just blankets and toys so the babies can frolic in their undershirts and diapers, getting lots of exercise.

"At 7 p.m. we get them into pajamas, put them in their high chairs, give them some milk, and read them a bedtime story," explained Cheryl. "Then we join a prayer circle with them, kiss them good night, and carry them to bed."

And rest up for the next day when it starts all over again.

WHEW!

