

Eagle handicapped take to the slopes with zeal

By LYNN ORR

The artificial lights bouncing off the snow-covered slopes at Alpine Valley permeate the black night.

As the skiers race into a patch of simulated moonlight, Bob McCollier watches three figures at the top of a gentle slope. Two adults and one child are outlined against the trees.

One adult slips, but the child already is heading down the hill, and McCollier returns his son's grin as Robbie glides to a stop.

Watching your child successfully maneuver on skis is thrilling for any parent; for McCollier, the thrill goes a little deeper.

Robbie is physically handicapped, one of six such children in a new ski program developed at Eagle Elementary School in the Farmington School District. Eagle is the Physically and Otherwise Health Impaired (POHI) center for Oakland County, serving the Farmington, West Bloomfield, Birmingham, Southfield, Novi, Walled Lake, Novi, Northville, South Lyon and Huron Valley school districts.

Eagle staff members, the Alpine Ski Patrol, and volunteers are the guiding hands behind the program.

ROBBIE, a Novi resident, was on skis for the fourth time last week. But he already was tired of the tow ropes



ELIZABETH STAMOS

and anxious to try the chair lift again.

He may be the most advanced skier of the children in the program, most of whom are minimally impaired because of cerebral palsy, neurological damage that affects balance and coordination. But attitude is why Robbie is advancing.

"He's the type of child who believes he can do anything," says Liz Stamos,

"We all need to feel success in order to feel self-worth. For some, it's the first time they've ever felt success at doing something athletic."

—Liz Stamos

speech and language pathologist at Eagle and the program's coordinator.

"And he does."

"I like to go fast," says Robbie, when asked what he likes about skiing.

Skiing is the first sport that's captured the enthusiasm of Marc Elias, 11, of Farmington Hills, says his mother.

"I'm astounded," Mrs. Joan Elias explains. "When he comes home from school on Tuesday, he wants to leave right away for Alpine. This is the first time he's ever shown enthusiasm about anything."

THAT'S the kind of zeal Ms. Stamos hopes to encourage among the children. "The objective is socialization for the children, to mainstream them into a normal, leisure-type, non-competitive sport," she explains. Mingling with children other than the handicapped is a bonus, and a better sense of balance and coordination is a byproduct.

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An avid skier herself, Ms. Stamos believes the sport lends itself easily to the program's objectives.

"It's an individualized sport, and it doesn't matter what level they're at. We didn't want them comparing their performance with others."

MS. STAMOS heard about a similar program at the Mt. Carmel Rehabilitation Center in Detroit through Mary Jo Barzay, who was associated with the Center last year.

"I thought to myself—why didn't I think of that? And started to get moving."

She and other members of the Eagle staff put in a lot of research on similar

programs in Canada before attempting to get the program off the ground. They based their program on one used in Vancouver and took the idea to the Alpine Valley Ski Patrol.

"Pete Gagnon, director of the ski patrol, really helped get the program going," she explains. The patrolmen offered their time and expertise, and Alpine offered facilities free of charge. Monday night is Mercy night, while Eagle's children ski on Tuesday night.

However when the patrol's enthusiasm matches the children's, time limits evaporate.

"This is the first time the patrol's ever done anything like this," Gagnon says. "It's been a lot of fun, mainly because the kids are having fun."

Each child is accompanied by a ski patrolman and a volunteer, who can be a parent. Adults and children began with very short skis, 65-100 centimeters long, employing the Graduated Length Method technique.

"As the children improve, they will gradually go to a longer length," Ms. Stamos explains. The children use a wide track parallel stance, as opposed to the knees-in snow plow position.

They start without poles on a "gentle area."

"As they get better, they'll get poles and move to terrain where there's a little more speed," she says.

Before the children ever hit the slopes, they were prepared with exercise classes at Eagle, as well as tests to determine if they were physically capable of participating in the program.

The staff used motor activities developed by the Vancouver program to test the children, including a test for ability to endure temperature change. Medical consents from a child's physi-



Six-year-old Eric Braun of Birmingham has the guiding hands of volunteer Donna Doyseher to assist him down the slopes.

cian and written parental consents also were required.

For Ms. Stamos, combining her favorite pastime with her occupation is a joy, but helping a child achieve success is a triumph for everyone involved.

Sarena Huff, 9, a resident at the Sarah Fisher Home in Farmington Hills, was taking the whole thing in stride last week.

"The self esteem she's learning has carried over into school," explains Sharon Markham, who works with Sarena.

North Farmington High School student Gregg Chuba, who volunteered for the program, is learning something himself—the short skis are a lot harder.

If there's any jealousy among the



It's obvious that Danielle Meade of Orchard Lake and Alpine ski instructor Marty Neighbors are having a good time on the tow rope.

Pothole fever strikes as winter ravages roads

By JOE MARTUCCI

Pothole.

The word sends shivers up the spine. Visions of twisted suspension systems, mangled shock absorbers, dangling mufflers, lost hubcaps and dented wheelwheels flash through the mind.

Pothole watchers say motorists can expect a bumper crop this year. The craters are appearing earlier than usual, they add, due to an abundance of snow and freezing temperatures.

Officials agree on another point. Telegraph Road, between Twelve Mile Road in Southfield and Orchard Lake Road in Bloomfield Township, have some of the worst potholes in the area.

To make matters worse, officials say that until reconstruction of Telegraph is complete—in 1981—the situation won't improve. If anything, it'll probably get worse.

"The road is shot, there's no doubt about it," said Franklin Police Chief Frank Wilson. "It's the worst I've seen since I've been around here."

Loss of hubcaps is common, Wilson added. "One night recently we had to haul out three cars with wrecked wheels. The holes have become much more pronounced. The stretch between Twelve and Fourteen (mile roads) is the worst to travel on."

WHY is Telegraph worse than other area roads? Ed Voucher, a spokesman for the state Department of Highways and Transportation, which has jurisdiction over Telegraph, cites several reasons.

Because the road is old it's full of cracks. When snow melts the water seeps through the cracks and gets trapped below the road surface. When the temperature dips again the water freezes and expands. Another thaw creates a cavity.

Once this has happened, a pothole is inevitable, Voucher said.

"When you've got 20,000 or 30,000 cars traveling over a road surface, in a couple of hours you have a sizable pothole. It's what's under the road that counts. A road is only as good as its drainage," he said.

Clay beneath the road surface is the real culprit, according to Voucher. It traps the water. To solve the problem, the clay must be dug out and replaced with sand and gravel. Drainage tubes are installed to carry excess water off into roadside ditches.

That's how freeways are built, said Voucher. And that's why freeways have fewer potholes.

"Telegraph should have been reconstructed 20 years ago," said Ernie Savas, assistant to the district maintenance engineer for the highway department. "It's had a real bad history of being in terrible condition."

The repair of Telegraph potholes is the responsibility of the state. But the state has an ongoing contract with the Oakland County Road Commission to make the repairs. The four contractors working on reconstruction also must fix potholes as long as their crews are on the job.

WHILE YOU might assume that the state isn't going to spend a bundle of money to fix a road that's going to be replaced, Voucher said that's not the case.

"If they (potholes) are bad, we'll have to fix them. We can't let them stay that way," he said.

Savas said the road commission does a satisfactory job of patching potholes. The contractors, however, aren't equipped for it and their efforts are less effective.

Potholes are more than a nuisance, police said. They are a traffic hazard that can cause a motorist to lose control of his car. Accidents can result.

Lt. Jeff Werner, patrol commander in Bloomfield Township, said the situation is most dangerous at the intersection of Telegraph and Square Lake roads.

Traffic signals at that intersection were modified last week to help the flow of traffic, which had become snarled by construction work and poor road conditions, said Werner.

Chief Wilson complained that motorists are driving too fast on Telegraph. Speed limits in the construction zone has been reduced to 40 miles per hour.

Staff
photos
by
Harry
Manthe

New CPA's certified

Calvin Abbott, 32536 Nottingham, Farmington Hills and John Comai, 32004 Valley View, Farmington, have been granted Certified Public Accountant certificates by the Michigan State Board of Accountancy.

Grondin attends workshop

James Grondin, of 21722 Malden, Farmington Hills, is among 39 leading general agency field representatives attending the John Hancock Institute's intermediate estate and business planning workshop. Grondin is the staff manager at the Grand River district office in Westland. He is a graduate of Oakland University, Rochester.

Employee is honored

Roy Tassinare of Farmington Hills, a general agent of the American National Insurance Co.'s Detroit branch office, marked his 25th anniversary with the company, Feb. 1.

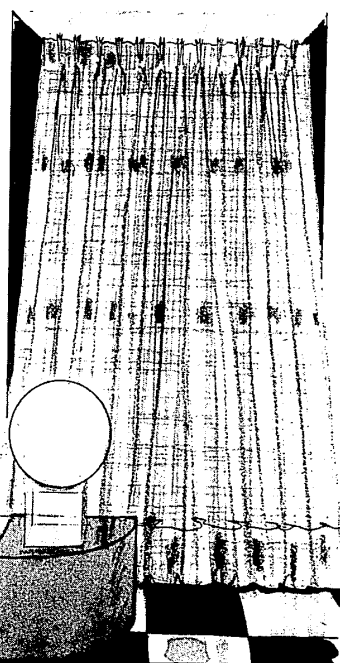
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