

Mainstreaming

A long shot pays off as Tim moves into junior high

By LORAIN McCLISH

Fourteen-year-old Tim Nichols entered Power Junior High School this fall — hardly a spectacular happening, especially if you've entered four new schools in the past two years.

But for Mr. and Mrs. Don Nichols of Farmington, it was a long shot that paid off after all the struggle, tears and academic red tape surrounding the learning disabled child.

What Tim experienced a year ago this September when he entered Flanders Elementary School is what the academic world calls "mainstreaming," moving the handicapped from a sheltered and exclusive classroom into a regular school environment.

Tim is a hearing disabled child.

The boy had but one friend at the time, but "is now on the phone all the time and finally acting like a teenager," said Alice Nichols of her son. "A

year ago he didn't have any one to call."

"I had a house full of kids all summer, and Tim will be able to cope with come-what-may in junior high. I know."

TIM'S PARENTS were never too concerned with his grades during his younger years, but rather with his social stagnation. Tim has about 50 per cent hearing capacity.

As time went on the child was shifted

from one special education class to another. His speech patterns, and consequently communication with others, seemed to be regressing rather than progressing.

When the concern was at its greatest, Tim was spending three hours each school day traveling back and forth to a special education class for the deaf in Ferndale.

"He had special teachers over there, and on paper it would appear that he was getting all the help that one kid could use," Mrs. Nichols said. "But in reality he was becoming isolated in a deaf world."

Part of the problem was that there is no category in the school system for the partially deaf.

"You are either deaf or you aren't," Mrs. Nichols said, "so Tim was with those who ran the whole gamut from hard of hearing to profoundly deaf."

Another part of the problem was that the mixture of students in the deaf classroom brought a mixture of communications.

Some knew sign language. Some knew lip reading. Some knew pieces and parts of each.

The upshot of this was that the isolated class devised its own system of communicating with one another.

WHEN THE NICHOLS took their initial step to investigate getting their son into Flanders Elementary School with the sixth graders in his neighborhood they ran into obstacles on two fronts.

The school system balked because tests showed Tim was not ready to be moved.

Tim balked because he had finally found a comfortable and secure niche where he could communicate easily with his friends.

"But if he doesn't leave soon, he was going to be buried in that world. He never would have gotten out," his mother said.

Tim had failed every test deemed



TIM NICHOLS



ALICE NICHOLS

necessary before a child, with no matter what handicap, can be mainstreamed.

"I am not blaming the school system or the testing or the laws," Mrs. Nichols said, "but my child was being spoken of as a quotient number, not as a living, breathing person and it reduced me to tears."

"I want parents who are in situations like we were to exert all the pressure at their disposal and exert every right they have to fight for what they believe is right for their child."

"They have to know the law very well to do this and they have to make it their business to know what those tests are all about and if they are valid or not in their particular case."

DON NICHOLS is provost at Oakland Community College, and is well versed on the federal laws that affect the handicapped coming into Orchard Ridge Campus.

Alice Nichols has a masters degree in art education.

"What on earth happens to the kid whose parents don't have an educational background, or money for tutors, or a big brother willing to help him with his homework?" Mrs. Nichols asked.

Or know a few of the right people in the right places.

The couple's biggest supporter in helping Tim become mainstreamed was Weldon Petz, Flanders Elementary School principal.

"He had to convince the teachers there that we just had to try something, anything. It was a big gamble for everybody concerned," Mrs. Nichols said.

Those teachers, the Nichols were to discover, were afraid to accept Tim.

But the couple have high praise for teachers Thomas Shillito, Marion Rosbalt, Kathy Young and Lady Satterfield, "who gave Tim the best, school year of his life," Mrs. Nichols said. She called Tim's time in Flanders "a miracle in terms of progress."



Tim and a friend from his neighborhood, John Troudeau (left), enjoy model building in the basement of the Nichols' home. Construction of kit models has been one of Tim's favorite pastimes throughout the summer.

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GLENDIA KIRKLAND
Sept. 29 soloist



SONNY ELIOT
"Carnival" narrator

Oakway Symphony has season of variety set for music fans

A "French spectacular," two Beethoven concertos, a tribute to the University of Michigan and highlights from Carmen are on tap for fans of Oakway Symphony Orchestra this season.

Conductor Francesco DiBlasi calls Oakway's seventh season the best yet of musical offerings in suburban Oakland and Wayne counties.

The OSO office is already filling membership-ticket orders. Brochures and forms are available by calling the office at 476-6544 or writing to Box 171 Farmington 48024. Season tickets also are available at Hudson's, Madonna College in Livonia and Hammell Music in Livonia.

SIX SUBSCRIPTION concerts have been planned — half on Sundays at 4 and half on Saturdays at 8 p.m. Here is

the lineup of programs and soloists:

• Saturday, Sept. 29 at 8 p.m., Madonna College, 1-98 at Levan — "French spectacular" program with the "Gaité Parisienne" of Offenbach and "An American in Paris" by Gershwin. Featured performers will be soprano Glenda Kirkland, who has appeared with the Detroit Symphony; the Apache Dancers from the Livonia Ballet Academy, the Can-Can Dancers from Miss Bunny's School of Dance; and guest conductor Ernest Jones. Quiche Lorraine and wine will be available prior to the concert and at intermission.

• Sunday, Nov. 11 at 4 p.m. in Harrison High School, 12 Mile west of Middlebelt, Farmington Hills — the Beethoven "Triple Concerto" featuring Alfio Pignotti, violin, Samuel Mayes, cello, and Dady Mehta, piano. Pignotti

and Mayes are on the Eastern Michigan University faculty and Mehta on the University of Michigan's. The programming reflects DiBlasi's penchant for concertos with multiple performers. Although this concerto is a "standard," it is rarely performed by other than metropolitan orchestras because of "the difficulty of getting three artists to put it together," said DiBlasi.

• Sunday, Dec. 2 at 4 p.m. in Southfield-Lathrup High School, 12 Mile west of Southfield Road — The Beethoven Concerto No. 5 for Piano and Orchestra ("Emperor") with Flavio Varani as soloist. Varani is artist-in-residence at Oakland University and was warmly received by Oakway's audience in his 1974 performance of the Tchaikovsky first concerto.

• Sunday, Feb. 24 at 4 p.m. in Mercy

High School, 11 Mile and Middlebelt, Farmington Hills — centennial salute to the University of Michigan School of Music. Mozart's Symphonie Concertante for four winds will feature Anno Mariotti, oboe, John Mohler, clarinet, Louis Hugh Cooper, bassoon, and Louis Slout, French horn. In Saint-Saens "Carnival of the Animals," Paul Boylan and Morris Risenhoover will be piano soloists, and television personality Sonny Eliot will narrate. Boylan is the new dean of the U-M School of Music.

• Saturday, April 19 at 8 p.m. in Harrison High School — winners of the second annual young artists competition. Last year's four winners received a total of \$3,000 in prizes from the Michigan Foundation for the Arts, and their solo performances in concerto works was one of the most popular programs of the season. (Musicians interested in competing should write promptly to Oakway Symphony, Box 171 Farmington 48024. Judging will take place in January.)

Tickets are \$6. Write to the symphony office for a brochure and table reservation information.

DiBlasi said there are several openings in the orchestra. Interested musicians should call him at 425-8618 to arrange an audition.



Students from the Miss Bunny's School of Dance in Livonia will perform the can-can during the French spectacular "Gaité Parisienne," the Oakway Symphony Orchestra's season opener on Saturday night, Sept. 29.



Francesco DiBlasi (right) of the Oakway Symphony Orchestra discusses an upcoming concert with piano soloists from the University of Michigan School of Music: Paul Boylan (seated) and Morris Risenhoover.



Soloist Flavio Varani returns for a guest appearance with Oakway Symphony on Sunday, Dec. 2.