

# Suburban Life

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## Goodwill Ambassador March of Dimes poster child fills the bill 'delightfully'

By Lorraine McClish  
staff writer

When March of Dimes sets out to seek a poster child the staff members look for a youngster who is outgoing, comfortable in meeting the public, a child who is verbal and confident.

Lindsay Stefanko, the daughter of Jeannine and Chuck Stefanko of Farmington Hills fills that bill "delightfully," said Annette Pryce of Southeastern Michigan March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation.

"She is so confident and presents herself so well we know she'll take her interviews in stride as one of our Goodwill Ambassadors."

In the areas of comfortable and confident, her mother said Lindsay had been cited as "the most successfully mainstreamed student we ever had" by one of her teachers at Eagle Elementary School when she went from kindergarten to first grade.

"I just want to make her as independent as possible. That's the goal," said Jeannine Stefanko. "I want her to keep her happy attitude and never have any bitterness. The lesion in the motor strip of her brain can never be closed. It'll be there for the rest of her life affecting the muscles. So far she's been happy. She wants to keep on the go. I can take her anywhere. She talks to everyone and makes friends easily."

SHE ALSO smiles a lot. She smiles as she chats about her school, her art work, her swimming, her friends and her horseback riding.

She smiled when she told her mother, (politely) that she would like to answer her own interview questions.

She smiled all through the showing of a photograph album that stretched back to the days when her parents first realized their daughter was not crawling or walking as other one-year-olds, and the days when she was getting sponge-bathed because her legs were in casts.

Lindsay's cerebral palsy went undiagnosed for a full year. Physical therapy started immediately after that and school started at age 2. Jeannine Stefanko credits much of Lindsay's accomplishments in social development to the classes her daughter attended in her preschool years in Fairview Early Childhood Center, her horseback riding sessions, and to Dr. Chris Lee of St. John Hospital.

"He advocates de-hospitalizing and de-institutionalizing his patients," she said.

Lindsay gets around the neighborhood, generally to friends who have swimming pools, sometimes with a walker, sometimes with her battery-powered Probe, and most recently a tricycle which she has just mastered. Carriers on all three vehicles hold snacks, and more often than not art materials or pieces of her finished art.

"I like to keep busy," she said. Lindsay said "going shopping" as one of her favorite things to do, and "Little House on the Prairie" as her favorite TV show.

***'I just want to make her as independent as possible. That's the goal.'***

— Jeannine Stefanko

Staff photos  
by Randy Borst

Her mother interjected, "It's her favorite because there isn't that much time for anything else on television."

TRAVELS TO horseback sessions out of doors in the summer, at Stony Creek Farms in Rochester, and indoors in the winter in Bloomfield Open Hunt Club in Bloomfield Hills, consume the bulk of out-of-school time for both Lindsay and her mother.

Lindsay was the youngest rider in the group when her mother, seeking one more type of physical therapy, connected up with Easter Seals, which in turn put her in touch with Oakland County 4-H Clubs, which put her in touch with Horseback Riding for Handicappers.

"I could tell as soon as we had our first lesson we were going to be involved in this," Jeannine Stefanko said. "Her legs loosened up which is important because she has tight muscles. Her back was strengthened. She started out on a mule, trained specifically for this purpose, and she now posts and trots and directs her own reins."

"Along with the physical benefits the lessons have given her self-esteem, confidence and one more social outlet."

Jeannine Stefanko has just accepted a position on the board of directors for Horseback Riding for Handicappers to be one of its spokespersons.

"We've met so many wonderful people there. They are all volunteers and they do so much good, giving pleasure to these children as well as therapy. I wanted to be a part of it. I want to share some of my good experiences," she said.

"When Joannie Barker (a Farmington Hills resident and a volunteer with the 4-H riding program) asked me about having Lindsay as a March of Dimes poster child, I hesitated. I had to think about it for a while, thinking I might be exploiting her," she said.

With Jeannine Stefanko's affirmative decision made, mother and daughter will take their roles as spokesperson and Goodwill Ambassador simultaneously.

"I'm more outspoken about my daughter's problem than many parents I've met so I think I can be an asset to that board. And the more I thought of it the surer I was that Lindsay could serve as a good example, an inspiration for others," she said.



Lindsay Stefanko is happy, confident, secure and makes friends easily, which are all the requisites necessary to make a Goodwill Ambassador for March of Dimes.

## Have women artists been brushed aside?

By Shari S. Cohen  
special writer

It seemed the perfect title for Patricia Hill Burnett's speech about women and the arts.

Speaking before the Southeastern Michigan Chapter of Mensa, Burnett quickly established her personal link between women's issues and art.

A portrait painter and feminist, she mentioned her position as international chair of the National Organization for Women. Burnett has spoken frequently in Oakland County, around the state and country.

Women artists have faced a "universality of discrimination," Burnett said. "The common characteristic of women artists has been a lack of education."

PARTLY AS a result, many have depended upon 'artist fathers' or other male artists as mentors.

In Burnett's view, the lack of educational opportunity has been the nemesis of women artists.

"Let me dispel the myth of artistic genius," she said. "It is not a nugget dropping from the sky or a mutation, and it is not limited to men."

Rather, she maintained, artistic development depends on social institutions — school, systems of patronage and family support.

And it is these factors that have worked against prospective women artists for centuries.

made for daughters. Until 1893 women were not allowed as students at the Royal Art Academy in London.

FREQUENTLY they were barred from life-drawing classes, essential for training as a painter, because it was deemed inappropriate for women to view nude figures.

According to Burnett, the art apprenticeship system did not include women.

While male artists could travel to study, work and develop patrons, women were busy taking care of others.

"Art was viewed as busy work for women, occupational therapy. Marriage was promoted as the main aim and this eliminated competition for men," she said.

"Women are told their greatest creativity is to bear children. Art is OK if they're not neglecting their children."

Despite the dearth of encouragement and simple lack of time due to their role as homemakers, some women persisted and created noteworthy works of art.

BUT OFTEN they received no public exposure for their work. In some cases like that of Marietta Tintoretto, the daughter of Jacopo Tintoretto, and Judith Leyser, a 17th-century German painter, their work was attributed to their father or another man.

Such misattributions are not uncommon, Burnett said.

women whose painting was signed by a man to enhance its acceptance.

"The problem continues today, according to Burnett, who usually signs her paintings with only a first initial and last name to avoid gender identification.

"In 43 years with 1,000 shows, only five women artists have exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art.

NINETY-FIVE percent of the pri-

Eighty percent of a national cross-section of adults say they are "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with their physical condition, a University of Michigan study indicates.

Three-quarters of the men and 65 percent of the women perceive themselves to be more physically active than others their age. Most of these also thought they got as much exercise as necessary.

These statistics concern U-M assistant professor of physical education, Christine L. Brooks, who conducted the study. "The vast majority of these individuals never did any form of physical activity that would even begin to challenge their cardiovascular system," she reports.

"Ninety-nine percent never jogged; 95 percent never or rarely bicycled; 90 percent never or rarely swam; and 93 percent never did any other sport. These men and women were walking, with 20 percent claiming to take long walks often. Twenty-three percent said they en-

vate galleries do not have women artists' work on exhibit," said Burnett.

A member of the audience asked how she managed to circumvent the negative environment for women artists.

Burnett said that her parents divorced when she was 3 and as a result her mother focused a great deal of attention upon her.

gaged in an active hobby such as gardening or dancing."

Brooks' research is spurred by a U.S. Department of Human Services directive to "have 60 percent of the adult population physically active by 1990." This poses a formidable challenge, she said. "While considerable research shows a potential link between physical activity, good health and enhanced well-being, we know little about how to effectively communicate this message to the public."

The fundamental question seemed to be: how do people assess their physical condition in the first place? To find out Brooks analyzed data from the 1997 National Center for Health Statistics which surveyed a national sample of 3,000 American adults aged 20-64 on personal health practices and consequences.

"THE DATA base has some limitations in that the categories were not well defined and the questions

As the daughter of a prominent physician, art classes were feasible and her interest and ability in art were nurtured, helping her to eventually earn prominence as a portrait painter.

She has painted the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, former First Lady Betty Ford, former Michigan Gov. William G. Milliken (whose portrait was the first official

different evaluation strategy or to meet certain goals. The recommended minimum is vigorous exercise 35 minutes a day, three times a week."

DESPITE CLAIMS about the popularity of exercise, one-third of the American adult population never exercises, according to Brooks' studies, and only 10 percent meet the exercise requirements believed to prevent heart disease, the country's leading cause of death and second leading cause of disability, accounting for 53 million lost workdays annually.

"Encouraging vigorous physical activity thus becomes an important tool for preventing lifestyle diseases, containing national health care costs, and promoting a higher overall quality of life," she says. "But until we better understand what motivates people to exercise more, the 1990 goal will be impossible to meet."

"Overall, the findings suggest that Americans are satisfied with their physical condition if they perceive themselves to be healthier and more energetic than others in their social network," Brooks concludes. "We should be encouraging them to use a

painting of an American governor done by a woman, among other famous individuals.

For Patricia Hill Burnett, ability, circumstance and will have kept her from being "brushed aside."

But in general, women artists seem to have had a limited canvas to paint upon, and the visual arts still seem less promising than for their male counterparts.