

COMMUNITY LIFE

Mentoring program pairs kindred hearts



Eric BORREGARD

U.S. students fail in global market

While dining out with a French couple my wife and I know in Bordeaux, I casually mentioned that America's goal is to make its students number one in the world in math and science by the year 2000.

They both began to laugh along with their son who came along with us. The father quickly countered, "You do realize you're talking about a country that completely failed to convert to the metric system?"

Their son, who graduated from North Farmington in the late 1980s, began to question us. "If they don't use the metric system, how will they keep up with international science developments?" I don't think these kids are going to be number one in anything. All the examinations at North Farmington are multiple choice or true and false. The teachers never make them write essays. All the students do there is drive around in cars playing their silly games. It's all made so easy for them; they never have to study."

His mother then explained the difficulties her daughter had adjusting after four years in the Farmington schools.

She said: "When we came back to Bordeaux, she was tested and put back one full grade and had to go to the summer school. She then failed the entrance exam at the university she always thought she would go to. You know, the director told me it's like she learned absolutely nothing the whole four years we were away in Farmington. When we returned to Bordeaux, our son was trapped; he could not come home with us. He

See BORREGARD, 15A

Farmington Youth Assistance matched a Farmington Hills man with

a young boy who needed extra attention away from his family. It filled a gap for the childless man and gave the youngster a special friend and guide.

BY DIANE HANSON
SPECIAL WRITER

There was something missing in Douglas Minguski's life. He and his wife, Chris, married for 12 years, had been unable to have children. But there was certainly no lack of children in their lives. The Minguski's have nine nieces and nephews.

"But you don't get to see them as often as you want to," Minguski confided. He taught school for a year, was a little league and a minor league coach and was always around kids.

"I enjoy kids very much," the Farmington Hills resident said. "The neighborhood kids are always over. But I think I just wanted something a little more on a personal level."

Last spring Minguski went to city hall and said, "I'd like a list of your volunteer organizations."

No time was wasted in directing Minguski to Farmington Youth Assistance and the PLUS (People Listening, Understanding and Sharing) Program.

"We recruit adults to work with kids who need a mentor, a one-on-one person to spend quality time with," explained Deborah McAleer, a Farmington Youth Assistance case worker. The program is sponsored by the Oakland County Probate Court and funded by the cities of



SHARON LEWIS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Filling gaps: Doug Minguski and LaJuan Larkin, both of Farmington Hills, spent time together recently at Heritage Park.

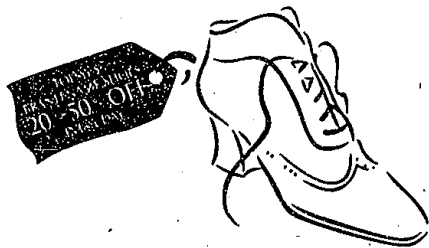
Farmington and Farmington Hills. The volunteer is directed to the Oakland County Probate Court for a screening interview. There is a routine check of driving records and

any criminal records "to make sure the adults are appropriate role models," said McAleer. The volunteer must also attend one four hour training session.

Farmington Youth Assistance matches the volunteer to a young person — usually between 7 and 12

See MENTORING, 14A

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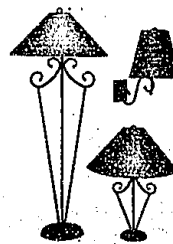
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