



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LAMMIEUX

**Skilled communicator:** At right, Doreen Joseph communicates with a laptop computer that reads a message aloud. Above, Doreen poses with her mother Marilyn Joseph.



# Adult ed grad defies odds with sterling marks

BY JILL HOCKMAN  
STAFF WRITER

Some 18 years ago, then-teenager Doreen Joseph was seriously injured in an auto accident that left her comatose for more than a year. Doctors said she wouldn't survive.

They were wrong. But when Joseph finally pulled out of the coma, her limbs were paralyzed and she couldn't speak. Joseph's mother asked one doctor about rehabilitation.

"You're trying to beat life into a piece of dead wood," the doctor said.

Once again, Joseph has proven those doctors wrong. Today — after years of therapy and support

from family and friends — she is a 34-year-old Southfield woman who writes poetry and helps a nephew with his homework. And Joseph recently finished her high school course requirements through Farmington Adult Education's High School Completion program. She maintained a 4.0 grade point average throughout the two-year program.

Joseph is still a quadriplegic and still can't speak. But she can move one of her fingers, which she uses to operate a switch connected to a special computer that she uses for writing. The same computer has a voice mechanism that she can use to "talk."

Her latest accomplishment:

recognition from the governor's office. Joseph was one of 28 students from throughout the state who were honored recently at the Governor's Education Honor Roll Awards Luncheon at the University of Michigan.

The event was part of "Investing in Ability Week," that promotes the employment of people with disabilities.

"I felt very honored and thrilled that I was chosen," Joseph wrote on her computer when asked about the event. "And that not only had I finished my classes but that my counselor and teachers realized how hard I had to work. It was wonderful."

Terry Leland, who heads Farm-

ington Community School, nominated Joseph for the honor. "She was a very conscientious student . . . I think she supplied a very positive role model to the other students," Leland said. "After the first class she took, it really was a very easy transition."

"I'm glad that we tried this. It would have been very easy to say, 'I don't think we can accommodate this,'" Leland said. "She's a bright girl, and very hardworking and very determined. I am very proud that we have her here."

Joseph's mother, Marilyn, said the whole family is proud of her. "She was going to go back to school and prove that it was possible. She wanted to show every-

body that this was something she could do," Marilyn Joseph said.

But it was also hard work, according to Doreen Joseph, especially when it came to science classes. English classes were easier, she said.

"Being back in school was strange. It was as if I never left in a way . . . only most of the students were older like me. The older ones were serious about their work and tried not to stare. The younger ones just ignored me."

She got in trouble one day for laughing so hard that the entire classroom erupted in laughter.

"That made everyone else aware that I could enjoy things too, and they became more curi-

ous and friendly," she said.

Doreen Joseph said she finished high school with help from her friends, family and teachers. A friend who served as an interpreter attended classes with her every day, and her mother read books to her "because my eyes double on me when I get tired," she said.

"My dad fixed my computer, which kept breaking down, and read my papers. My sister encouraged me and we both studied together. Sometimes all my sisters and I studied together, and the room was filled with low mumbling voices. That's togetherness."

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

### Happy Holiday Hunting!

Santa Claus will arrive in downtown Farmington Saturday, Dec. 2 — and with him, hopefully, will come loads of Christmas spirit.

Santa will alight from a helicopter at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Downtown Farmington Center, Farmington Road and Grand River, accompanied by the Farmington High marching band, to kick off the third-annual "Holiday Hunting."

Developed as a family/multi-cultural event, Holiday Hunting celebrates the December holidays from around the world through performances, educational activities and a "treasure hunt" through downtown Farmington.

Children will receive fun activity sheets and trinkets relating to holidays such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Dawall and Boxing Day.

The sponsoring Downtown Development Authority encourages attendees to bring their holiday packages to the tent in the center parking lot. Volunteers from Team Farmington, the local Special Olympics group, will wrap gifts for a nominal donation.

Canned food to benefit the needy will be accepted at the Civic Theater, where a free movie will be shown.

Getting around town will be easy on a classic trolley that'll run throughout the shopping districts. There also will be free tours of the Farmington Historical Museum, strolling Dickens carolers, Kwanzaa candle lightings and complimentary hot cocoa.

Flyers showing complete schedules and activities are available in downtown Farmington merchants, at the city halls and libraries. For more information, call the Downtown Event Hotline at 473-7283.

### Hi, this is Santa

Area youngsters will be able to tell Santa what they want for Christmas thanks to a North Pole Hotline sponsored by the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services.

Santa will come to town Wednesday, Dec. 13, to telephone the kids with holiday wishes and to inquire as to their Christmas wishes. Calls will be made between 4:30-8 p.m.

To register a child, stop by the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services, in back of the Hills City Hall at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads, and fill out a form by Monday, Dec. 11. For more information, call 474-6115.

### Sam's people shine

Throughout the fall, Sam's Club of Farmington Hills has encouraged employees such as Cheryl Cook, Joni Schatko and Tony McHugh to take part in several fund-raising activities to help local families cope with muscular dystrophy.

The employees sold red, white and blue stars prior to "The Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon," as well as popcorn, candy on the weekends. Additionally, Dr. Solomon Cogan, a Sam's Club member, offered free chiropractic services for a donation to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

### An open greenhouse

McFarland Florist and Greenhouses will hold a holiday open house Friday-Sunday, Dec. 1-3, at the business, 28315 Grand River, Farmington Hills.

Hours will be 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. Decorating tips, special discounts and entertainment will be offered. Call 474-0750 for more information.

### Kosher food pantry

The recently-renovated Farmington Hills branch of Credit Union ONE is a donation site for Yed Ezer, a kosher food pantry for those in need in metropolitan Detroit.

The facility, formerly Covenant Credit Union, is located at 31600 W. 13 Mile Road.

The credit union is made up of 2,500 former Covenant members who are employees of the organizations belonging to the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit and members of B'nai B'rith lodges, chapters and units in Michigan.

"We are proud to be a member of the Farmington Hills community," said Andrew Dally, manager of the local branch. "As we do in each of our locations, we look forward to participating in Farmington Hills and becoming active in the community."

### They're on board

Four Farmington Hills residents have been appointed to city boards and commissions by the city council.

Dante DiVito and Mary Lou Barnard were named to the Commission on Aging for terms expiring Feb. 1, 1997. Gail Haynes and George Sarkisian were appointed to the Committee to Increase Voter Participation. Their terms expire Feb. 1, 1998.

### Memory Lane

From the Dec. 1, 1955 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

■ A fire completely destroyed the Wigley supermarket at Grand River and Elgin Mills Road, causing \$600,000 in damages.

■ The Farmington-Livonia Bentley basketball game was to have been the first official event in Farmington High School's new gymnasium.

■ Attraction at the Civic Theater was "The Fighting Kentuckian," starring John Wayne and Philip Dorn.

■ Free U.S. Savings Stamps were offered at Farmington Meats, 33419 Grand River, where home smoked pig hocks were advertised at 29 cents a pound.

■ Short item: "Success nowadays is making more money to pay the taxes you would not be paying if you had not made so much money already."

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48338; faxed to 477-9728; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address is: packy@goonline.com.