

Newcomers welcome

Special classes help immigrants learn enough English to get started in school.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

They are separated by school four doors, whereas in their native countries they'd be torn apart by civil war.

Milica Gvozdenovich quietly studies English literature at table in the back of the room while twin sisters Anita and Aida Begonovic giggle and tap away on a classroom computer in front. Gvozdenovich is from Yugoslavia; the Begonovics are Bosnian.

Their distinct situation, though, is somewhat overshadowed in the global diversity of the newcomer room at Harrison High School.

Asian, Middle Eastern and South American students join those from Eastern Europe to learn the English language and get acquainted with the American school system. Similar newcomer rooms exist at Beechview and Kenbrook elementaries and East Middle School.

Immigrant students spend the first two hours learning English. A third hour is used for tutoring.

Those tasks alone keep bilingual teacher Prenk "Frank" Ivezaj and paraprofessional Emily Cheung busy, sometimes quelling fears and hatred harbored through years of war.

"You have to tell them they're free and convince them they don't have to worry," said Ivezaj, who is a native of Yugoslavia. "You tell them, 'You have to put other things behind you. You have a new life now.'"

A new life that immigrant students see as filled with goals and promise.

Gvozdenovich arrived in Farmington Hills six months ago and is staying with an aunt. The 16-year-old junior wants to do well at Harrison and, ideally, go to the University of Michigan on scholarship.

If unsuccessful, Gvozdenovich is prepared to go back to

Yugoslavia "where college is free."

She struggled at first, especially with English where "there are so many words." She also takes chemistry and math during the afternoon.

Her grasp of the language has improved dramatically.

"When I first came here I knew maybe two sentences. 'Hello my name is . . .'" said Gvozdenovich, who is from Montenegro, Yugoslavia.

When the Bosnian twins arrived in October, Ivezaj had Gvozdenovich sit down with them in the school cafeteria.

She also helped the pair through orientation, which includes teaching new students how to operate lockers, use the library and when to talk to a counselor.

The volatile situation in the former Yugoslavia is not a discussion topic.

"We try to encourage them to be friends instead of talking about Yugoslavia," Ivezaj said.

Aida and Anita have limited English ability. The twins came to Farmington Hills from Austria where they lived for three years. Their family moved here after their father lost his job.

Both type their names on a Macintosh computer, adding they're big fans of CITA.

"(They are) a music group," said Anita, who likes the newcomer room "because the teachers are great."

Newcomer rooms were started this year to give immigrant students a chance to learn English first before being put into the system, bilingual director Samir Haddad said.

Haddad is familiar with problems of new students as former bilingual director in Hamtramck, where Eastern European immigration — where both the parents and their children do not speak English — is prevalent. Farmington schools are seeing more zero-English students.

■ **'They have a chance to come here and receive ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and it establishes basic English skills for them.'**

Prenk "Frank" Ivezaj
—bilingual teacher

"It opens up a lot of windows," Ivezaj said. "This is what you would call equality. They have a chance to come here and receive ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and it establishes basic English skills for them."

Such rooms didn't exist when Ivezaj arrived here in 1984.

Ivezaj came as an exchange student from the former Yugoslavia. He attended Wayne State University and later Eastern Michigan University where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees.

His transition was a shock, Ivezaj said.

"Mine was the old theory you call sink or swim," he said.

Two students were buoyant enough to have already graduated from the newcomer room, which is decorated with artwork describing students' native lands. The rest of class is expected to start regular class schedules next school year.

Average stay ranges from one semester to an academic year.

Patel Bhavna, 16, came to the newcomer room afraid to speak English. The fear subsided enough where the native of Gujarat, India, can compare teaching styles between here and her former home.

"Here, they always answer us when we have a question," Bhavna said. "In India if you don't understand the speech and you asked them to repeat it, they wouldn't. They just keep on going."

Making It compute:
Bilingual teacher Prenk (Frank) Ivezaj shows twins Anita Begonovic (seated) and Aida Begonovic how to use the keyboard on a computer in the Newcomer Room.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SILVANA LEZIMET

Special help: Paraprofessional Emily Cheug works with student Patel Bhavna in the Newcomer Room at Harrison High School.

Public safety department urges caution before shoveling snow

Before lifting that snow shovel, Farmington Public Safety Fire Marshal Joe Schornack wants residents to heed some advice.

The Public Safety Department responds to medical emergencies, including those involving people who have over-exerted themselves shoveling.

"This time of year I would like to get out a (message) on some precautions for shoveling snow," Schornack said. "Recently, we had some very cold weather, along with snow mixed with rain, creating very heavy snow shoveling conditions."

Schornack said the Safety Council of Southeast Michigan offers the following advice:

- Individuals age 40 and older should be careful, especially those who are relatively inactive.
- If you have a history of heart trouble, do not shovel snow without your doctor's permission.
- Take it slow — shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically. Be sure to stretch your back and legs as well as other muscles

before you start.

■ Shovel only fresh snow since it is easier to shovel than wet, packed down snow.

■ Push the snow as you shovel. It is better for your back than lifting the snow out of the way.

■ Don't pick up too much at once. Use a small shovel or fill only one-fourth or one-half of a large one.

■ Lift with your legs bent and your back straight. By bending and "slitting" into the movement, you'll place less stress on your spine. Let your shoulders, torso and thighs do the work for you.

■ Do not work to the point of exhaustion. If you run out of breath, take a break. Stop immediately if you feel tightness in your chest.

■ Dress warmly — Remember that extremities, such as the nose, ears, hands and feet need extra attention during the winter cold. Be sure to wear head and face protection, gloves or mittens, wool socks and waterproof boots.

CAMPUS PIPELINE

THETA CHI

Wes Cornwall and Matt Hankins have been inducted into Theta Chi Fraternity at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Campus. Both Wes and Matt are 1996 graduates of Farmington High School.

DEAN'S LIST

Barbara Ann Chwalik of Farmington Hills was named to the College of Mount St. Joseph Dean's List for fall semester, 1996. To earn that distinction, a student must have a minimum 3.5 grade point average.

TOPS AT HILSDALE

Thomas Plagens of Farmington Hills was named to the Hillsdale College Dean's List for

fall semester 1996.

MAKING THE LIST

The following students from Farmington Hills have earned a spot on the fall Dean's List at Schoolcraft College: Patricia Ann Cray, Cari Annette Gibson, Mary Isam Haddad and Katerina Semjanova.

ACTF WINNER

Eric Gutman, a sophomore Musical Theatre Performance major at Western Michigan University and a graduate of Harrison High School in Farmington



Gutman

Hills, has won the regional competition at ACTF's (American College Theatre Festival).

Gutman was nominated for ACTF's for his portrayal of Dr. Einstein in WMU's production of Arsenic and Old Lace. He has appeared in several shows including Little Shop of Horrors at Harrison High School and The Secret Garden at WMU. He is the lead vocalist for the alternative music group, Affliction, which has three albums on the market.

Eric and his competition partner George McConnell of Canton, Mich., will travel to Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center to compete in the national competition April 20.

BUSINESS MILESTONES

PROMOTED AT MARX LAYNE

Jeffrey Schultz of Farmington Hills has been promoted to account supervisor for Marx Layne & Company, a Farmington Hills-based full service marketing and public relations firm.



Schultz

portation and financial services industries. He joined the firm as an account executive in March of 1994. Previously, Schultz was an account supervisor for PR Associates, Inc. in Detroit.

Schultz is a 1991 graduate of the College of Literature, Science and Arts at The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He resides in Farmington Hills.

NEW VP

Gregory Stanbury has been appointed senior vice president of Johnson & Higgins of Michigan, Inc. in the firm's Detroit office.

Stanbury joined J & H in

1990 as a vice

president in the Detroit Client Management Department. Prior to joining J & H, he spent eight years with major brokerage firms in Detroit and has a total of 23 years of insurance and risk management experience. He also serves on the boards of the Central Business District Authority (CBDA) and Western Golf and Country Club, as president for 1996-97.



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