



Teamwork: Rich Sorenson (left) of Plante & Moran CPAs of Troy and Tom Landry of A.J. Ethin Construction Co. of Farmington Hills work together to finish one of the railing posts for the new ramp. The men were part of a group of alumni from Leadership Oakland to work on the project.



Leaning In: David Cloyd, who brought a Troy High School service group called Project Lead to help with the ramp, leans in to the job with two arms straddling the railing.

Ramp built by leaders improves youth's mobility

BY VIVIAN DeGAN
STAFF WRITER

Like many 13-year-old boys, Tony Richards, of Waterford, scowls affectionately when his mom nags him to take off his baseball hat in front of company.

But Richards, who stands about four feet tall, said he's waited four months to wear his hat.

Mom concedes. Four months ago, for the 14th time in his life, the growing teenager endured major surgery on his spine and skeletal frame. The operations were necessitated to save his life from his own deteriorating bones.

Tony, who prefers to call himself a little person, was born with a genetic dwarfism called Morquio



Keeping watch: Thirteen-year-old Tony Richards (right) watches as members of Leadership Oakland and other volunteers build a new wheelchair ramp at his Waterford home.

Syndrome, a condition in one out of 400,000 births.

In June, he flew to St. Joseph's Hospital in Baltimore for 13 hours of surgery and 10 days in a full body cast, followed by four months at home recuperating with his skull screwed in a half-dozen places to his "halo," which connected to a body brace.

Tony said in all, he's had 20 places around his head where the halo has been screwed in. His red hair has grown back, but he still prefers his hat.

"The doctor said there was such severe decompression, it could have severed his spinal cord. It would have taken him from us," said Gloria Richards, his mom. "His surgeons have fused all the vertebrae in his neck and upper trunk."

Grafting bone tissue taken from both of Tony's

legs, the bones were used to help rebuild his spine, which now is fused from his skull to the upper trunk.

The good news is, Tony was standing and walking up to 60 feet with his walker Saturday to meet the Leadership Oakland volunteers who came to build him a handicap-access ramp.

Thanks to the efforts of Leadership Oakland, the boy, who has traveled out-of-state by commercial jets, private planes, ambulance and stretcher, will for the first time in his life, be able to leave his house under his own steam.

"Just like any other teenager, now he can walk down the ramp, or use his wheel chair down the ramp, get to his motorized scooter in the garage,

Please See RAMP, A15

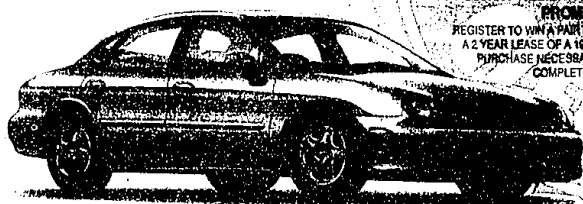
SUBURBAN FORD DEALERS THE FORD FACTORY AUTHORIZED CLEARANCE CONTINUES!

NOW GET:

2.9 % APR FINANCING FOR UP TO 48 MONTHS **OR UP TO \$2000** CASH BACK(1)

PLAY THE SUBURBAN FORD DEALERS
DETROIT RED WINGS SHOTS ON GOAL
PROMOTION

REGISTER TO WIN A PAIR OF RED WINGS TICKETS OR
A 2 YEAR LEASE OF A 1998 FORD EXPLORER. NO
PURCHASE NECESSARY. SEE DEALER FOR
COMPLETE DETAILS.



97 FORD TAURUS



97 FORD RANGER

OPEN SATURDAYS TO SERVE YOU BETTER

(1) 2.9% Ford Credit APR Financing for qualified buyers on 97 Taurus (excludes SHO) and 97 Ranger. 48 months at \$22.09 per month per \$1000 financed with 10% down. Dealer participation may affect savings. \$2000 cash back on 97 Taurus, \$1500 cash back on 97 Ranger. Tax, new retail delivery from dealer stock by 1/5/98. See dealer for complete details.

**VARSITY
FORD, INC.**
ANN ARBOR
3480 Jackson Rd.
(313) 996-2300

**BRIARWOOD
FORD**
SALINE
7070 Michigan Ave.
(313) 429-5478

**ATCHINSON
FORD SALES, INC.**
BELLEVILLE
9800 Belleville Rd.
(313) 697-9161

**HINES PARK
FORD**
MILFORD
130 S. Milford Rd.
(248) 684-1716

**BRIGHTON
FORD**
BRIGHTON
8240 W. Grand River
(810) 227-1171