

Field trip fun lightens load for Eagle kids

By LINDA TAYLOR

Planning a field trip for pre-schoolers and elementary children is no easy task. But when the children are in wheelchairs or have to be diapered because of physical handicaps, the problems mushroom.

Yet children attending Oakland County's special education program for the physically handicapped at Eagle School, Farmington, have been to the zoo, the airport and even Bob-Lo.

Even though stairs to the pressroom may pose a problem, a trip to see how a newspaper is published may be in the offing.

Such trips, as well as eating in the lunchroom and making bicentennial projects are as much a part of school for the 36 handicapped children as they are for the normal child.

According to Helen Moore, a physical therapist at the school, "The philosophy of special education is changing. Handicapped children used to be hidden away in the closets at home. Today we're getting them into the regular classroom."

Ms. Moore and the others involved with the special education program at Eagle agree that except for their handicaps—which include lack of speech, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy—the children are like all other youngsters. They enjoy art, music, gym and going on field trips.

THE CHILDREN come from Farmington, West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham, Walled Lake, Southfield, Clawsonville, Novi, South Lyon and Huron-Valley school districts.

They are bused to Eagle for half-day classes. While much of the special equipment and supplies needed for the children is located in a separate wing of the school, the three teachers involved are quick to point out that the children are integrated into the normal classroom as much as possible.

Ruth Kahn, for example, team teaches with another Eagle teacher not primarily involved with the handicapped.

Mrs. Moore emphasized that through the mandatory education act, handicapped children are guaranteed an education through age 21 if they are educable.

The children are orthopedically handicapped, not retarded, she added. Depending on the degree of brain damage, the children can continue their education at least through high school.

From Eagle, handicapped students progress to Warner Junior High and Harrison High School.

"We have some very bright children," said Mrs. Kahn.

The children are encouraged to become independent. Some of those who have "ballooning problems" have learned to diaper themselves and all but one child eats lunch in the school cafeteria.

Most of them manage very well," she said.



Heidi Sims plays a word game which is used in Mrs. Ruth Kahn's class.



Roxanne Kennedy, of Farmington Hills, uses her walker to help steady herself as she hits the baseball. This is one of the many ways in which therapy is made fun.



Brian Colmeyer gets a big hug from teacher Carman Shaw while he waits for a bus to take him home.



Michael Logan gives the camera a big upside down smile as he returns from lunch in his big wheel.

Photos by
Mitch Booth



Laurie Echols (right), of North Farmington High School, watches as Sarana Huff uses a three wheeler for exercise.

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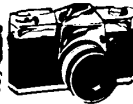
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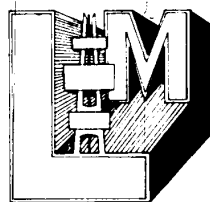
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