

# Suburban Life

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(F5B)



A world champion in international motorsport, Jackie Stewart told Adventure School students that until age 42 he thought of himself as thick, stupid and dumb.

## Expert champions schools that help learning disabled

By Jeanne Whittaker  
staff writer

**W**HETHER IT is a vicarious thrill derived from watching films such as "Le Mans," or the actual experience of sitting alongside Germany's Nurburgring or Detroit's Grand Prix race course, there is no denying the feeling that you are dancing on the cutting edge amidst superheroes every time the engines of the International Formula Ones begin to roar.

Traditionally an overseas glamor sport, Formula One racing captured Detroiters' imaginations when it was introduced onto the streets of downtown Detroit.

Suddenly, a city familiar with football, baseball and basketball terminology was also expert in the lingo of international motorsport.

A figure such as Paul Newman is gaped at in awe not only because of his acting ability but because of his reputation as a talented technician behind the wheel of a race car.

It now seems natural to see racing figures touting the merits of Detroit's auto industry. Enter motorsport's three-time World Champion Jackie Stewart, a soft-spoken Scotsman supercharged with charisma.

Stewart teamed up with his old friend Edsel Ford II to put pizzazz back in the way the public views Ford Motor Co. by associating Ford products with motorsport.

Stewart revealed another side to his personality last week when he visited Birmingham's Adventure School to meet the school's 110 students, at the invitation of Ford general sales manager Philip Norvell and his wife, Holly.

Stewart also gave the school one of his racing helmets. Valued at \$2,000 and decorated with the Royal Stuart tartan, the helmet will be sold during a benefit auction on Saturday, March 22, at Kensington Academy.

The money is for a building fund to expand the school for learning disabled youngsters who come from such communities as Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Troy, Rochester, Southfield, Farmington and Livonia.

PRIOR TO meeting the excited students, Stewart

*'Adventure School, and schools like it, are better for these children so that they can discover that they have things that they are good at. The greatest crime of all would be if their true potential is never allowed to be manifested.'*

— Jackie Stewart

half good at," he said, "you strive to be good at it. That first flush of success is intoxicating."

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art explained that at the age of 42 he learned that he had dyslexia, an impairment of the brain's right and left hemisphere coordination. Dyslexics find that it is virtually impossible to absorb what they read.

All of his life, he confessed, he had thought "I was just thick, stupid and dumb. My academic ability was zero."

He would have continued to think that, he said, if astute educators at a school in which his sons, Paul and Mark, were enrolled hadn't decided to find out why the two boys were having difficulty with comprehension.

Once the diagnosis was made, Stewart said, the school began asking questions about the parents. It was then that they zeroed in on his own scholastic performance and he found out that he, too, has dyslexia.

Yes, he said, it was a sensation of complete relief to learn he was neither thick nor stupid, that the inability of the left and right sides of his brain to communicate was the culprit.

"My school years were the worst of my life," he recalls, adding that the pain of his academic failure was compounded by peer pressure. When it became unbearable he dropped out of school at age 15 and went to work in his father's garage.

**LOOKING BACK**, with the advantage of hindsight, Stewart said that his unrecognized disability drove him to achieve, so much so that he will be returning to Scotland this spring to hand out prizes at the same Dumbarton school that represented his academic Waterloo.

"When you discover something that you can be



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Stewart tells students about his confusing disability that prevents him from recalling the alphabet or the Lord's Prayer,

but lets him recall every detail of the 107 turns that make up the world's most difficult race course.

Staff photos by Gary Caskey