

Forest students adopt pen pals

Katie Murphy's new pen pal sent her a Mickey Mouse pin and told her about new puppies.
 Jeffrey Gajda received bookmarks from China and stamps for his collection from his pen pal.
 Katie, a second grader, and Jeffrey, a fifth grader, are among 88 students at Forest Elementary School in Farmington Hills who are part of a new program called "Adopt A Friend." The program matches children at the school with writing partners from area senior citizen residences.

The "Adopt A Friend" project was started in February by the Forest Parent Teacher Organization. Children in kindergarten through the fifth grade volunteered to participate. Older students wrote their own letters; younger ones dictate to parents.
 "We wanted to do something for the community that the children could do themselves," said Merle Grossman, who heads the program. "The children are becoming friends with senior citizens in the community."

THE PROGRAM provides real educational benefits to those taking part.
 "It gives the youngsters an opportunity to not only write a letter, but to get a response," Forest principal Walter Jablonski said. "It's better than doing an assignment in class. The children get to practice their writing skills."
 Jeffrey Gajda's pen pal, Laura Stratton, was a teacher for more than 30 years. She has written Jeffrey about her life experiences.
 "She has traveled to 75 different countries," Jeffrey said. "She told me about the most interesting countries she had seen - Kenya, Uganda and East Africa. She wrote about how she slept in a tent and heard the lions roar. She sounds like a real nice lady. I love getting letters, and I can learn a lot from her."

THE PROGRAM is expanding to be more than an exchange of letters. Thirteen residents of Farmington Hills Inn attended a recent assembly at the school and met their pen pals. Next year, the PTO hopes to bring individual senior citizens to the school to share their experiences with students. Children are also being encouraged to continue their correspondence on their own over the summer.
 Other residences taking part in "Adopt A Friend" are Wilmersford, Detroit Baptist Manor, American Home, West Bloomfield Nursing Home, Cardinal Retirement Village and the Williamsburg Coalescence Home.
 Members of the organizing committee include Debbie Strickstein, Tami Fox, Carol Roble, Jon Fischer and Lisa Ellis.



DOUGLAS E. SUBALLA

Helping to recycle

Beth Watson, (left) 5, of Farmington Hills, helps her grandfather, Ervin Watson of Farmington Hills, deliver a bundle of old newspapers to a newspaper collection drive conducted by area Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts Saturday at Ten Mile Community School, Farmington. At right is Cassi Nicholls, 8, of Farmington Hills, a member of Brownie Troop 583. The day-long drive was in observance of National Recycling Week.

Jigsaw competition set

Puzzle Place's second annual jigsaw competition will be held May 12-14 at Farmington High School in the gym.
 Visitors are welcome to attend and view the contestants and the various methods used by them to complete the puzzles within the 3-hour time limit.
 There will be both single and doubles competition. The singles will be given a 500-piece puzzle and the doubles will be given a 1,000-piece puzzle. All contestants work on the same puzzles, which are new releases.
 There are still openings for anyone interested in competing. Call 471-4141, Puzzle Place in Farmington.

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