



Schools help non-speakers learn to interact

Harrison freshman uses electronic communicator

By Casey Hans
staff writer

NICOLE CHEKAWAY loves attending Harrison High School, has a home computer from which she plans to use to "hook up to the stocks" and keeps as busy as any other freshman in classes like English, math, history and science.

Her method of speaking is just a bit different.

The 15-year-old student uses an electronic communication device with a voice synthesizer to help her talk with others.

Due to her cerebral palsy, Nicole has limited vocal skills. She is currently coding her electronic communicator, which will allow her to use routine phrases. She also can spell out sentences or words if need be.

Conversation is Chekaway a bit slower, but can be just as effective.

With the help of shop students at Harrison, Nicole will soon have a tray on which to place her communicator, so she can take it everywhere on her motorized chair. When the tray is complete, she plans to practice using the device outside of school, she said.

"Like our mouth is with us at all times, her mouth should be with her at all times," said speech pathologist Liz Stamos-Bushey, who began working with Nicole when she was 5 and a student at Eagle Elementary. "We aim to try and do that as much as possible."

"I've seen Nicole come a long way — she has a lot of potential," she said.

MAY IS Better Speech and Hearing Month nationwide, and Stamos-Bushey stresses that the public should be aware of these methods of communication, which give many students a way to interact.

The speaking person needs to know so he or she can be "confident and familiar with the way they (the non-speakers) communicate, because their way may not be the same as the speaking population," she said.

At Eagle Elementary, one of the schools where Stamos-Bushey works, she talked about how one first grade class became accustomed to an elementary student's electronic communicator.

"We taught it in the form of a game," she said. "Their curiosity was piqued. I think it really helped them to include her."

Every few years at Eagle, the school sponsors a "Changing Places" day where students are introduced to the needs of people with various handicaps. They learn what it's like not to have use of various parts of your body, including limbs, eyes, ears and speech.

IT'S IMPORTANT for families to understand too, Stamos-Bushey said.

"It's a must that the parents become involved. They're involved in a child's complete development. It really takes a team approach."

In Nicole's case, her parents are involved with her speech therapy, and play an integral part in the progress she has made over the years, her therapist said.

NICOLE SAID she started learn-



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Nicole Chekaway works in her history class at Harrison High

School. She is in her first year at the Farmington Hills school.

ing to converse as a youngster using charts with symbols. Her charts eventually became more complex until she worked into using an electronic communicator.

Her newest device, which she got last winter, has unlimited memory and a female synthesized voice — many of the older devices only offered a male voice.

Her new device will have a vocabulary in 18 different everyday themes, including phrases about school, calendar and time references, and her feelings. Part of Stamos-Bushey's job is to help her develop this vocabulary so it is workable at all times.

HARRISON HISTORY teacher

Phil Stople said, although other students with disabilities have been in past classes, Nicole is the first student he has had who uses an electronic communicator.

He said Nicole is making progress slowly because she has been out of school for recent knee surgery, but he is encouraged by the possibilities.

"This is an ongoing process. You start as early as possible when you think it's needed," Stamos-Bushey said. "You get to be very close with these kids. You develop good friendships with them and their families."

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*Liz Stamos-Bushey
speech pathologist*

Inkwell

Inkwell provides news about Farmington-area primary and secondary students and education issues. The column appears monthly as part of the Observer's "School Page." Send news items to: The School Page, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. Include a telephone number where a contact person can be reached during the day. Items will not be taken over the phone.

POETRY WINNER
Emily Otajuli of Farmington won second place in the Poetry Society of Michigan's Young People's Poetry Competition.

Her poem, ELVIS, will be entered in the Manningham Competition sponsored by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Otajuli is an eighth grader at Power Middle School in Farmington Hills. Her prize was awarded in competition between students in grades 7-9.

WINNERS NAMED
Several Detroit Country Day students from Farmington Hills have been highlighted in recent releases from the school, in Beverly Hills:

• Rajveer Purohit, a senior, won a scholarship to Kalamazoo College as the third prize in a math/science competition. He will receive a grant of \$1,000 per year for four years.

• Purohit and Michael Warren joined several other students as finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program. They are among 14,000 finalists nationwide.

• Heather Shenkman won first place in the America & Me Essay Contest sponsored by the Farm Bureau Insurance Group. Her essay has advanced to state competition, to be announced this month.

YOUNG WRITERS
Two Farmington Hills middle school students are on the list of 18 state winners in the National Council of Teachers Promising Young Writers contest.

Karen Cichosz of Dunckel Middle School and Jessica Curtin of Power Middle School were winners. Each submitted a best writing sample and wrote an impromptu piece. This year's topic was a comparison of a book and movie version.

In Farmington Public Schools, the contest was coordinated by the DELTA Department and gifted coordinators Bob Prior and Barbara Rebbeck. Rebbeck is also the statewide coordinator for the program.

CALDECOTT QUILT
Staff at Wooddale Elementary have used the Caldecott Award books for an on-going study for second graders which will eventually culminate in making a quilt for the Farmington Hills school.

Students are now drawing their own illustrations, which will be transferred to fabric and made into a quilt to be hung in the school.

Once finished, students will write their own stories; these will eventually be made into a book at the Wooddale Publishing Center.

SPECIAL DAY
Teachers involved in the project include Sue Foster, Bev Basso and Jeanne Marshall, and media specialist Virginia Cheek.

BALLOON LAUNCH
Students at Farmington Community School celebrated the Month of the Young Child with a balloon launch during the week of April 24.

Each helium-filled balloon had a card with school name and address, asking the flier to write to the Farmington Hills school. A bulletin board will display letters and cards received due to the project.

The school hallways were also "decorated" with children's footprints and alphabets to show everyone how very special each and every child is," said program coordinator Phyllis Howard.

BOOK BATTLE
East Middle School sixth graders won first place in the Battle of the Books, a competition sponsored by the Friends of the Farmington Community Library.

Champion readers included Jenny Domino, Michelle Gulchard, Linda Lacina, Laura Larnheid and Juliana Turse.

Teams from Our Lady of Sorrows, Power and Warren also participated. Winners each received a book certificate from the Little Professor bookstore.

The Battle of the Books program is designed to promote reading for fun and give recognition to those who participate. Team members read from a list of eight books and

then compete with other teams by answering questions based on the books.

WRITING WINNERS
Three students at Power Middle School in Farmington Hills placed in the Farmington American Legion Auxiliary Unit 346 writing contest.

Eighth grader Mike Raffle won \$50 savings bond for his essay entitled "I'm Proud to be an American."

Second-place winner Sean Murray and third-place winner Erin Schefler won \$10 and \$5 respectively. All are students in Martie Porta's advanced placement English class.

HISTORICAL NEWS
A six-member team from Power Middle School in Farmington Hills won first place for their production of a Historical Newscast, circa 1887, in the 1989 Social Studies Olympiad.

Team members Cathy Connor, Kathy Foxall, Eunla Lee, Kevin Murphy, Andy Wayne and Sara Yagman produced the program, which takes a humorous look at the lumber industry in Michigan in 1887 and included an interview with Paul Bunyan.

The top three teams were invited to attend the Olympiad to receive their awards.

The video also won a first division award from the Detroit Area Film Teachers, the Michigan Student Film and Video Festival, which will be given May 13.

TEAM PLACES
Four students at Power Middle School in Farmington Hills placed sixth in a Social Studies Bowl. Eric Eslinger, Mike Fischer, Mike Kovach and Andy Wayne were on the winning team.

Another Power team comprised of Tripp Adams, Mike Langston, Sam Latra and Steve Scanlon in the elementary division also participated in the bowl.

LANGUAGE STANDOUT
Lee Albrecht, a student at Mercy High School, was named a United States National Award winner in Foreign Language. She was nominated by her Latin teacher at the Farmington Hills school.

VISIT COLLEGE
Four area high school seniors, all Farmington-area residents, visited Albion College's annual Scholarship Day. The event was open to all applicants eligible to receive academic scholarships to the private college.

Attending were North Farmington seniors David Appel and Sonia Singh; Mercy High School senior Jennifer Curtin; and Southfield Christian High School senior Charles Rousseau.

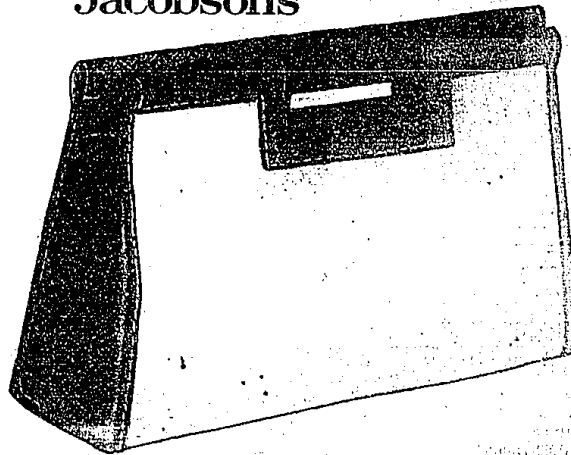
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