

Thursday, June 7, 1990 (L&E)

# Buddy program closes socioeconomic gap

By Paula Kirsch  
special writer

Caring and sharing. That is what the second grade students at Gill Elementary School have been learning about this year, along with reading, writing and arithmetic.

A continuing project, coordinated by Evelyn Kaplan through the "Gift of Reading" program, concluded a second successful year May 30 as two second grade rooms welcomed their Focus: HOPE "buddies." In November, the entire school collected and wrapped books for the two preschool classes.

The two classes are only part of the Focus: HOPE Center for Children, offering infant and toddler care, preschool and latchkey service for children of Focus: HOPE workers and trainees.

Cathy Beal's and Evelyn Kaplan's second graders, and Gill's student council, delivered the books along with a pine tree to plant in front of Focus: HOPE just before Christmas. On Feb. 14, the second graders had a "love" luncheon for their buddies, followed by a joint field trip to the Belle Isle Zoo in May.

Last week, their "buddies," 36 preschoolers ages 1 1/2 through 6, who attend the Montessori school at Focus: HOPE in Detroit, banded off the school bus to be greeted by their suburban counterparts. The children paired up quickly, an obvious bond of

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— Diane McKinney  
Focus: HOPE teacher

affection having developed throughout activities shared during the school year.

MARY SULLIVAN, manager of the Focus: HOPE preschool, feels that the exposure to the different cultures benefits both groups of children. "The children at Gill now know someone who lives in Detroit. They visit Focus: HOPE and are able to associate something positive with the city, rather than always hearing the negative side. The Focus: HOPE children know that all the people here at Gill care for them."

Diane McKinney, one of the teachers from Focus: HOPE, has observed a caring affection grow between the children this year. "The Gill students watch after the younger ones. They make sure their buddies are well taken care of."

What do the second graders at Gill have to say about all this? Danielle Corcoran said, "We went to the Belle Isle Zoo with them and sometimes I go to Focus: HOPE to play

and eat lunch." Schyler Boyd and Phillip VanWagner told of holding a bake sale to raise money for a special gift for their buddies.

Renee Morss said, "We help each other." Jonathon Kambouris likes sharing and doing things with his buddies. Lauren Rutelci observed that the buddies "don't cry when they don't get their way. They seem older."

THE FEISTY preschoolers were short on words, but long on smiles, giggles, and excitement — like bright-eyed Alyse Smith, 4, her hair neatly "corn-rowed" and decorated with green and yellow beads. Alanzo Carter, 5, diligently worked on an autograph book for his Gill buddy, Nader Kattan, 7, amid the hurried activity of Beal's second grade classroom after lunch.

Parents were invited to take part in the picnic last week and several did. Three generations in the Rutelci family have been involved with Focus: HOPE, according to Michele Meadows. Lauren Rutelci's grand-



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Camille Julian (left), 3, a Focus: HOPE student, laughs with her Gill buddy, Kevin Jodway, as they watch a puppet show.

mother and an ex-Focus: HOPE volunteer, Meadows joined granddaughter, Mania Rutelci, to give a special welcome to Winnie Thomas, one of the Focus: HOPE children she knew.

The children were treated to a presentation of a "Movement to Music" puppet show by Maureen Schiffman, stressing self-esteem, and caring and sharing. The children all held hands and sang "we'll help each other all we can."

A PTA grant awarded to second grade teacher Cathy Beal made the presentation possible. A picnic luncheon, donated by the Krogers at Grand River and Halsted, followed the show.

THE GILL students had some special surprises for their friends. A month ago Kaplan and Beal's students raised \$90 through a bake sale. They used the money to buy their buddies a gym toy called "popcorn balls." Their buddies enjoyed these toys earlier this year, during a gym class taught by John Wilkowski, Gill's physical education teacher.

The Gill students also presented their friends with Maureen Schiffman's "A Warm Summer Evening" videotape.

Mike Duff, the school principal, presented the preschoolers with "SAY NO TO DRUGS/SAY YES TO LIFE" T-shirts. The T-shirts were

donated by the following area merchants: Meijers, Bob Sellers Pontiac, Century 21 — Nada Inc., Elros Drugs, and Colonial Car Wash. The Gill children wear their identical T-shirts every time they go on a field trip with their buddies, and every Friday.

The Focus: HOPE children brought the Gill students friendship bracelets and a pot of Blackeyed Susans to symbolize their growing friendship.

"We love the concept of caring and sharing," said Kaplan, "If more of us did these kind of things — what a wonderful place this world would be."



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Gill student Darrel Durkid (left) chuckles as his little buddy, Floyd Armstrong, 3, takes his turn to perform on stage with a hand puppet.

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, 21888 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024. Include a telephone number at which a contact person can be reached during the day. Items will not be taken over the phone.

**FULL SCHOLARSHIP**  
Alexa Nichols of Farmington Hills was awarded a full insular scholarship to the University of Detroit.

The insular is based on academic and extracurricular achievement and includes full tuition and a dormitory room for four years.

Nichols attends Farmington High School, where she is active in Students Against Driving Drunk, the National Honor Society and the orchestra and variety activities. She also attends Oakland Community College and works for the Metropolitan Youth Symphony.

She plans to enter U-D this fall.

**QUIZ BOWL**  
For the fourth year in a row, students from Power Middle School in Farmington Hills competed in the Quiz Bowl at the Michigan Social Studies Olympiad. Coached by Jim Hagland, students competing included Andy Wayne, Amir Bagdadachi, Mike Kovach and Alice Crawford. Sarah Wayne, Laura Perry, Mike Carolan and Danny Gress.

Students in Betty Buckler's sixth

grade class at Warner Middle School also competed in the Olympiad's poster division. Using the theme, "How Geography Has Impacted on History," students captured three awards. Matt Schultz won first place and Brad Monash and Sarah Rauch won honorable mention awards.

**GOOD WILL**  
Students at Thomas Beahan Junior High School in Farmington worked on several projects this spring to help worthy causes.

Students in Mary Jo McNamara's seventh-grade religion classes each choose special projects. One class recently held a bake sale, raising more than \$300 for the Maplegrove Center in West Bloomfield. Another is holding a candy sale, with proceeds to the Children's Immune Disorders Foundation. Other classes visit nursing homes, child-care centers and other facilities.

During Lent, the entire school participated in Operation Rice Bowl. Cakes that could have purchased soft drinks, ice cream and candy were dropped into the bowl. By the end of the Lenten season, \$400 was raised and sent to Catholic Relief Services.

**NATIONAL MESSAGE**  
After studying map skills and becoming geographically aware of the various states, second graders in Susan Foster's class at Wooddale Elementary in Farmington Hills tried to sell their ideas.

Each student took the role of travel agent to "sell" various states, preparing travel brochures and other items, which have been forwarded to respective departments of commerce.

**WISHFUL TRAVEL**  
Fourth graders at Wood Creek El-

ementary in Farmington Hills worked on a travel unit this semester in which each student has an imaginary \$20,000 to spend for a trip.

They purchase a car and travel to various cities across the country, paying for gasoline, lodging, meals and other expenses. Upon reaching their destination, students write reports on their city and created a local newspaper from that location.

**NO DRUGS**  
Parents at East Middle School in Farmington Hills are uniting to protect their children from drugs. Principal Bill Martin said formal guidelines for parents have already been adopted, and that the group suggests parents set reasonable curfews for their children, promote drug-free activities for them and know where they are and what they are doing.

**ART CALLIGRAPHY**  
Farmington Hills resident, artist and parent Elaine Grohman visited Wood Creek Elementary last week, where she shared her work in calligraphy with the entire fourth grade. Grohman was invited as part of the class study of medieval times.

Grohman's Studio on Alycekey specializes in commercial lettering and design.

**ADULT GRADS**  
Graduation for 48 adults enrolled in the Farmington Adult Education High School Completion Program was held this week at Farmington High School.

According to program supervisor Terry Klenczak, the class represents the "largest class to graduate from this program for many years."

More than half the graduates are former Farmington area students.

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