

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



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Glastonbury

School is an alternative for students who learn differently

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

DEBORAH KNAPP said she was going to start a private school here if she had to open it with one student,

and that is what she did.

Knapp spent one school year teaching her son Justin at home using all the techniques she would utilize for her future students, then opened The Glastonbury School last fall housed in Bethlehem Lutheran

Church in Farmington Hills.

Knapp, who taught in both public and private schools in Texas, became interested in the students who were having a rough go of it when she became acquainted with parents whose children were designated as

"learning disabled."

"I won't believe they are learning disabled," she said. "They have learning differences. All children learn differently and a great many of them fall into the cracks. "Public schools teach mainly by

talking... so what is happening to the children who learn by seeing or by touch? And most private schools just won't deal with youngsters who have been labeled as learning disabled. I knew there had to be an alternative for the frustrated students as well as the frustrated parents," she said.

Knapp has based her school on the philosophy that individualization, structure and multi-sensory teaching will aid children to academic success.

The bottom line, she said, is building success upon success, and simultaneously, building self esteem.

learn spelling, math, science, every subject, with every approach.

"Andrea is a visual learner, so she and every student like her won't learn anything when the teacher is talking all day. When they are taught with all approaches they're going to catch it one way or another."

Andrea's mother has seen a vast change in daughter since September.

"She loves going to school and her whole personality has changed. She used to be a very shy child, but that's changed since her self esteem has jumped so high.

"She's just about at her grade level now and this has all happened in a matter of months," she said.

DONNA COFFEY said she had spent five years looking for the right teacher, spent years in research seeking out what might be the right methods of teaching for her daughter, took her out of school and taught her at home for one year, was met with frustration at most every turn and through all the obstacles refused to give up hope.

"I was told by both teachers and administration in both Novi and Farmington Public Schools that Julie would never read or write. I was told not to expect anything," she said.

I thank God that I found Deborah Knapp. She firmly believes that all children are capable of learning and she is sure proving it with Julie.

"Julie is flourishing. She loves school. She is reading, writing, doing multiplications and division. And all this since September."

Diane Ledesma, whose daughter Andrea is a student at Glastonbury School, said, "These children see it, hear it, feel it, touch it, do it. They

BOTH WOMEN mentioned that their daughters were now enjoying going to school, which is also part of Knapp's philosophy.

Glastonbury School takes its name from the street where Knapp grew up in Detroit.

"I had a beautiful childhood there, and I wanted some of that fun to carry over onto my students," she said.

"The world is everchanging and our goal is to help children to understand they are our greatest resource," she said. "The energy and opportunity we display now in helping them learn about our world will carry over into their world and the degree of enthusiasm they will have in making it a better place for all."

The school orients its full curriculum around the language arts. Reading, handwriting, spelling concepts are introduced through both the Alphabetic Phonics method a "whole language" program which are inter-

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SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Deborah Knapp gives a lesson in how water from the clouds gets into people's homes to her students Andrea Ledesma, Justin Knapp and Julie Coffelt.

Matchmaking

Big Brother and his little brother form a perfect friendship

By Shirlee Rose Iden
staff writer

EVERY CHILD needs that certain someone to relate to in a warm and special way. Last year at this time, Josh Cresswell of Southfield, then age 10, especially wanted to have a sharing pal, someone to go places with, to tell secrets to, and just to claim as his friend.

Josh lives with his mother, Gail Selman Cresswell, and older sister Joli, 14. His father, Andy, lives in Europe and is divorced from Josh's mom, which means that it seems to Josh his dad is divorced from him also.

Born in England, Josh lived in Israel for 18 months, but he came to Southfield about two years ago. His grandmother, Estelle, lived with the family until her death a few weeks ago. Josh says he and his grandmother were friends. He tried to help her by doing little favors for her during her long illness. Now he misses her.

According to Big Brothers-Big Sisters, headquartered in Southfield, and active in all of Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne counties, more than 100,000 children live in single-family homes. And each year their numbers increase.

PRESSURES on the parent and child can be enormous. Single mothers can be frustrated because they can't be everything and do everything for their small sons or daughters.

Sometimes a grandmother, like Josh's, with a different perspective can help, or a group-oriented program can try to fill the gap somewhat. In a case like Josh's, sometimes only a big brother can help.

"I felt for a long time my son needed someone, and I thought maybe a big brother could help him adjust to all the changes in his life," said the boy's mother.

Still, there was no instant solution for Josh. It took long weeks for the matchmaking Big Brothers-Big Sisters organization to find a "big" they thought would fit Josh's needs. Big Brothers are volunteers, so they are caring from the onset, being people who commit to giving up a certain amount of their time to help a child.

Ken Rich, a Farmington Hills who is a commercial litigator and practitioner of health law, said he thought about being a big brother for several years. "Then the subject came up with a couple of friends and they both said they already were big brothers. That did it for me."

THE MATCH between Josh and Rich was worked out by January 1990.

"They try to set you up with someone who lives near you or lives near where you work to make it convenient. I actually asked for a 'little' in October and by the end of January, (1990) Josh and I were hooked up," said Rich.

Rich said he was carefully screened, working through a three

hour interview and filling out questionnaires. "They told Josh and his mom about me," he said. "And they thought I sounded OK."

Growing up in Lathrup Village, Rich was once a delivery boy for the Southfield Eccentric, and now practices law in Bloomfield Hills. He is married but with no family yet. His wife, Judy Fertel-Rich, is a student at the Wayne State University School of Law.

"I thought this would be a positive contribution I could make. They told me I had to think in terms of a commitment of at least once a week for a few hours for at least one year."

He and Josh have their times together every week, usually one weekend day. "We have breakfast and make a day of it," said Rich.

"WE'VE WATCHED videos, gone to movies, fished, done errands, visited a farm and a zillion other things. "It's the only kid I know who can drive a 20 ton tractor."

As for Josh, a boy of few words: "It's fun, and I'm getting to do special things with a special guy. I like him a lot; he's fun to be with."

Talk about commitment. Rich and his wife moved to Chicago temporarily, and were there when Josh's grandmother died.

"When he heard about my mother's death, Ken called Josh and spoke with him. It was so kind," said Gail Cresswell.

Rich said the relationship is one with rules to live by. "But if I lec-

ture, he gets really annoyed, says I'm not being like a big brother but a bossy adult. This commitment has really given me a younger perspective."

If you ask Josh what the best outings he and Rich have taken are, he lists: fishing, driving (tractor), and the farm. Rich, an outdoorsman, has also taught his little brother about weapons and the rules of hunting.

Sometimes Josh and his big brother groom the horses that are kept near his Southfield home. Sometimes, they even ride them.

JUST LIKE a big brother, Rich is very proud of his "little" and likes to brag about him. "We went on a trip with a group and Josh was the best behaved kid on the trip," Rich said. "He organized all the kids."

"But I don't understand everything. I just can't understand why an 11-year-old needs an inch of syrup on his pancakes."

Not every child is lucky enough to have a friend to ease the loneliness and help with the stress that is so often present in single parent families.

There is a long list of children on file with Big Brothers and Big Sisters waiting for a friend. The opportunity to volunteer and relate in a unique way to a child in need is a real possibility and can enrich both lives.

For inquiries call Big Brothers-Big Sisters at 569-0600.



GUY WARREN/staff photographer

For more than a year now Ken Rich, an Oakland County attorney, and Josh Cresswell, 11, have shared a big brother, little brother relationship. They fish, bowl, go to the movies and sometimes get the chance to ride the horses kept near Josh's home.

Farmington Area Lions seek new members

A Farmington Area Lion is a man or woman who lives in the area that is a member of the Farmington Area Lions Club and is united to help those less fortunate.

The International Association of Lions Clubs' motto "We Serve" translates into action of fund-raising and then giving back 100 percent of the proceeds to the local community and those nearby.

"The club is looking for new members — people who want to help the visually handicapped, or other deserving persons, and is willing to give

some time in a unified effort to provide that help," said Marion Prover, speaking for the club.

"We're from 30-70 years old, we have a large variety of careers, some of us are retired, we have six women in our chapter, and we're all united in our desire to help the handicapped in some manner."

THE CLUB's first responsibility is to those in the Farmington Community. It provides eye exams and glasses to those not eligible for state or federal programs; white canes to

the visually impaired; and financial assistance to the local Head Start, Student Emergency Fund and Cloverdale School.

"Substance abuse has been shown to be a major cause of blindness," Prover said. "With this in mind, help is given to three local organizations that combat substance abuse."

"For years the Lions have directed their efforts to the visually handicapped, but it makes more sense to combat blindness before it happens rather than after it becomes a reality."

Lions give financial assistance to four statewide projects. The best known of these is Leader Dogs for the Blind in Rochester, which provides and trains dogs for the mobile blind. It also gives to Penicktor Center for the Multiple Handicapped in Taylor, where residents are taught to gain a sense of self-help and a better life for themselves.

LIONS SUPPORT Beaumont Silent Children which works with children from toddlers to teens with speech problems. And it supports

Welcome Home in Grand Rapids which provides a home to the ambulatory blind.

To attain these funds, \$15,000 was raised by the 30-member club in the past year with four money producing drives.

Members sell Christmas candles during the preholiday season, ask for contributions through the mail with Blind Aid Seals, sell chocolate bunnies in early spring and then in late April and early May are out in the shopping centers demonstrating and

publicizing the propose, use of and meaning of the White Cane while soliciting funds from the shoppers.

"We're proud of the trust that the community has shown in giving us money and allowing us to redirect those funds to worthwhile projects. In that small way, we make the Farmington community a better community," she said.

Kim Jaska is president of the chapter. Carole Kavalikan is membership chairperson who will take membership inquiries at 553-4850.