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# THE MORNING NEWS

4-11

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CLERICAL — Individuals working on Grand Rapids area. Full time available. Application Mon-Fri. 9-5. 241-6681.

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**PERSONNEL SERVICES**  
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**DELIVERY** — Early morning delivery agents, 5 day delivery of USA. Excellent earnings. Call 1-800-888-8888. Ask for Mr. Wingo.

**DELIVERY/COUNTER PERSON** — Afternoons Mon-Fri. Some training required. Apply at 1724 1/2 SW, 8-5pm

**DELIVERY/SALES** — Part time, Balloon and Gift Shop. Have good driving record. 1811 Plainfield NE.

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**DENTAL ASSISTANT** — Circulating in Grandville. Flexible hours. Please call or send resume to Dr. Jeff Smith, 3181 Prairie SW, Grandville

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**DRIVERS**

LAKE STATES 1 established nation needs professional bonding operation

**WE CAN DO**

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Named after that part of the day which provides the greatest opportunity, The Morning News reports activities of the transition grant project. This publication is made possible by a grant from the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, contract # 90415. Life Skills Institute, Jenison Public Schools, Jenison, MI 49428.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1990



Included in this issue:

From Canada to Mexico: Welcome to New and Past Subscribers

Parents Seeking Parents      Social Reading      A Special Substitute

A Question From Iowa and Texas      Training Site Update ...and more

About Our Cover: There's alot of talent on our front cover.  
Meet skill coaches (l to r) Judy, Joy, and Joan.  
Also talented, but not pictured, Melissa.

From Canada to Mexico: Welcome to New and Past Subscribers

In the last year, the mailing list for THE MORNING NEWS has nearly doubled. We now have subscribers extending from Toronto, Canada, to Mexico, and from Maryland to Oregon and California. This is our first newsletter of the 1990 - 1991 school year, and we felt it is fitting to introduce ourselves and provide you with a brief understanding of our project.

This newsletter is written, to a large extent, by Melissa Andrews and myself, Carol Gray. Melissa is the Transition Grant Assistant. I am an A.I. Consultant. Together, we work with: David Baas, teacher of the classroom for students with autism at Jenison High School; his assistants - Joan Seykora, Joy Brower, and Judy Parish - who are also vocational skill coaches; Sheri Vig, Speech Therapist, and eight terrific students.

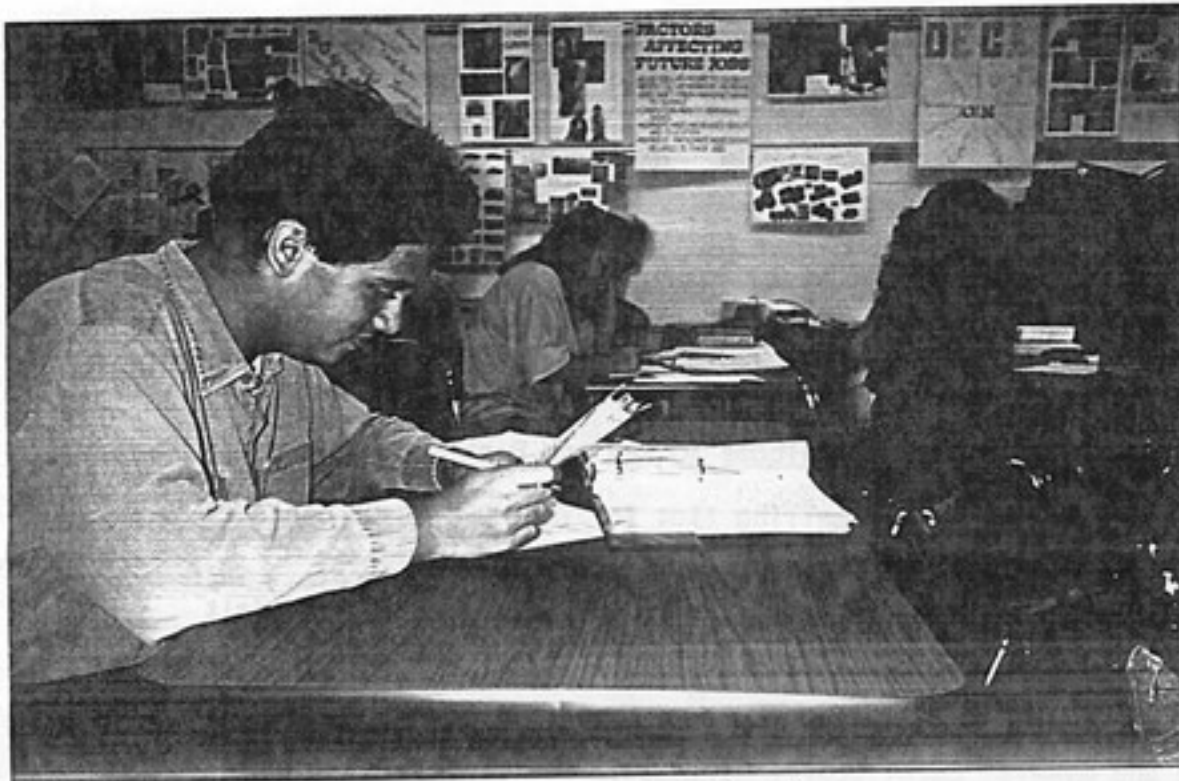
Melissa and I place our students in regular education classes and vocational training sites. I also work as a consultant to regular education teachers with elementary age students with autism in their home schools in Ottawa County. If this all sounds a bit confusing...it is...but it works so we don't mess with it.

This newsletter is written in our office in the 200 wing of Jenison High School. We share our office with anyone, even passerbys, and they are the ones who messed it up. (C)

About 4 years ago, our program at the high school received a federal grant, administered by the Developmental Disabilities Council in Lansing, Michigan. That grant, along with the support of Jenison Public Schools administration and several community businesses, established community based vocational training sites for our high school students with autism.

It was in these sites that we became aware of the need to improve our student's social skills. Toward that end, we began placing our students in regular education courses. Here, our goals were two-fold: to improve social skills, and to teach our students skills meaningful to them while in regular education courses.

We did not have support staff available to place along with each student in regular education. Our staff were busy coaching students



Above: Eric at work in Retailing.

In vocational training sites in the community. By re-writing the curriculum, developing new materials, and assigning class coaches (peers) to "look out for" (but NOT tutor!) our students, our students were able to meaningfully participate in regular courses. So far, with class coaches, an adapted curriculum, and the cooperation and dedication of some terrific regular education teachers, our students have been very successful.

We currently have about 19 area businesses that work with us in the area of vocational training. At Jenison High School, we have placed our students in Individualized Writing, Clothing and Textiles, World History, Theatre I, Theatre II, Drawing, Retailing, Merchandising, Aerobics, and Physical Education. Next semester we will add Ceramics, and Communications.

We've learned alot, and we've alot more to learn. THE MORNING NEWS is our way of sharing with parents and professionals from around the country.

We sincerely hope you will write to us so we may print your ideas also. Through this newsletter we'd like to share practical and useful information to improve our efforts on behalf of children and adults with autism.

Welcome to all subscribers re-joining us this year, and to those of you new to our mailing list. Welcome to Jenison, to the challenges of this grant, and a new school year. Please write us.

An Invitation to Students

We have published your letters in the past, and thank you for sharing them with us. Please send us copies of artwork or drawings, poems, photographs, letters...anything we can print in THE MORNING NEWS. We'd like to hear from you! If you would like us to return anything you send us, it is important you let us know.

Parents Seeking Parents:  
Other People Who Would Like You to Write

We've been contacted by two mothers of children with autism who would like to correspond with other parents with children who are similar.

First, Patricia \_\_\_\_\_ of Waukesha, Wisconsin, would like to correspond with parents of children who have both Down's Syndrome and autism. Please write her at this address:

Also, Candy \_\_\_\_\_ of Houston, Texas, would like to share experiences with any parents of high functioning children with autism in junior high. Here's her name and address:

Social "Reading"?

by Carol Gray

I have watched many videotapes, talked with many parents, read many articles, and observed children with autism in their classrooms. During each of these activities, in one way or another, the need for improved social skills for individuals with autism becomes apparent.

With all due respect to the social curriculums and social skills programs we've available to us...I honestly feel social skill development remains a pretty elusive educational effort. Somehow the word "training" in connection with vocational skills seems

okay...but the same word in connection with social skills makes me feel as though we have given up. Social skills TRAINING?

While we know students with autism have difficulty picking up on social cues, and attending to what is going on... the social objectives in the IEP state we'll work to improve "responses". Why don't the objectives also indicate we will systematically teach the student to "read" social situations and pick up on social cues? Is it because it is not possible?

We've some beginning evidence that it may be possible to teach an understanding of what is going on... Also some evidence that our students may already have good responses of their own, once they attend to the cues.

We have developed a Hierarchy for Assisting Students in "Reading" Social Situations. This hierarchy gradually fades staff involvement as students become more adept at "reading" social cues independently. Beginning with providing the student with a matter-of-fact description of what is occurring, this hierarchy gradually progresses to where the student answers questions about what is going on, to finally - hopefully - picking up and responding to situations on his/her own.

We're developing a range of activities to complement this approach. We're writing stories, like picture books at the elementary level, which describe specific situations our students find the most confusing or frustrating. As the year progresses, we hope to develop a sequence of activities to use at the secondary level, including reviewing videotapes with students.

A word of caution. This is a new approach for us, a new way of looking at social skills and children with autism. We haven't tossed out the social skills curriculums or objectives for appropriate social responses. We're just backing up a little..to assist students in any way we can in understanding, for themselves, what occurs in social situations. In this way we hope to broaden our efforts to help our students improve, and generalize, their social skills.

We'd be happy to share our current Hierarchy for Assisting Students in Reading Social Situations. Just send a note along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address at the end of this newsletter. We'd also like to print other ideas for teaching social skills in future issues of THE MORNING NEWS. Please send those our way with a note indicating we have your permission to print the ideas you send us. Thank you.

you send us. THANK YOU.

PROGRAM NEWS

Welcome!

We would like to "Welcome" one new student to our program. Ted began in Mr. Baas' class at Jenison High School this fall. Welcome Ted!

Aside from welcoming Ted, we would like to say "good-bye" to Joe. Joe was in Mr. Baas' class at the high school, and was a terrific worker at Herman Miller. Good luck Joe at your new school and we will miss you!!!

L.S.I. Staff and students,

MIKE

TED Carol

Judy  
Joy Brower  
Melissa Andrews

James

Joel Roberts

Babies!

Steve  
Joan Seykora

Love

Melissa

ERIC

Our project has experienced it's own BABY BOOM. Courtney Clark, Nicholas James, and Joey Vig were born during the last several months to three teachers working with us, Brenda Clark, Jodi James, and Sheri Vig. Add to that the mini-Andrews expected by Melissa in December, and the mini-Baas also on the way...and we've made a significant contribution here to the next generation! Congratulations!

A Very Special Substitute Teacher

Mrs. Lynda Ward began this fall as a child care leave substitute for six weeks in Retailing, and in Marketing and Merchandising. She learned on the first day of class that two of our students were in her classes, and welcomed the opportunity. Both our students have done well, and this is to her credit. She is terrific...we have

really enjoyed working with her.

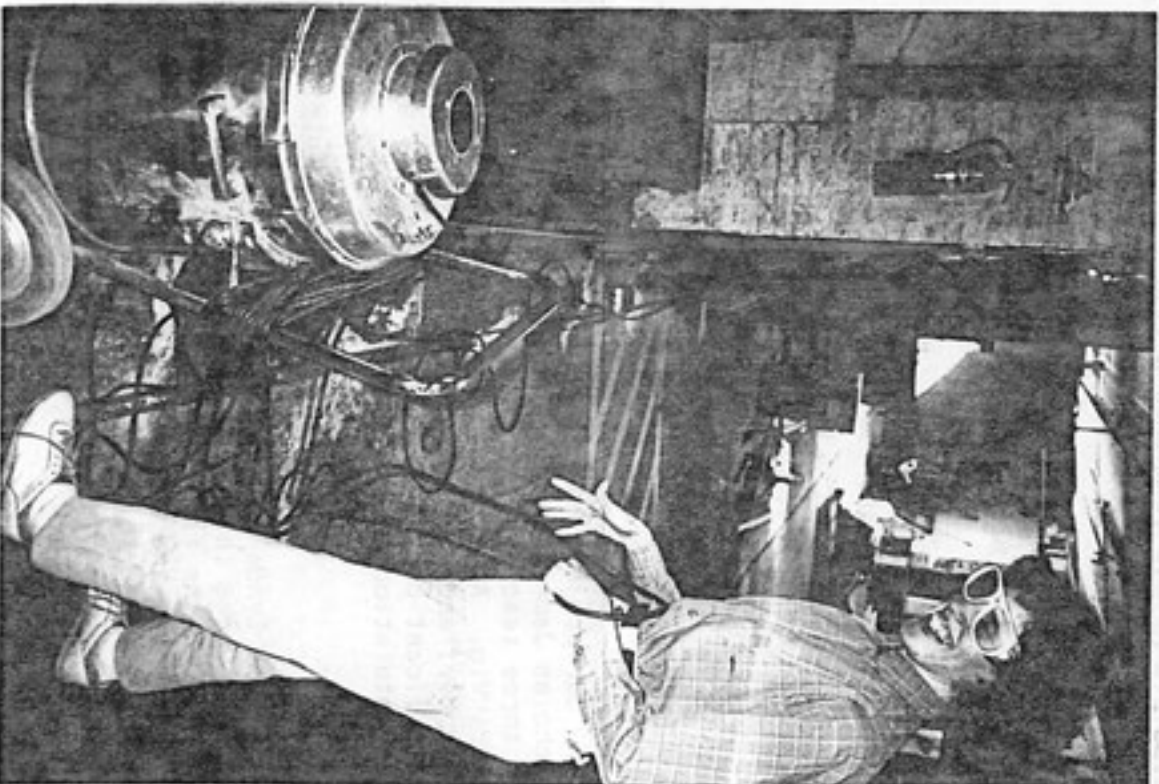
TRAINING SITE UPDATE:

VIDEO-TYME: Eric is back this fall at Video-Tyme. He is working five days a week for an hour each day. Eric works at his job without a coach. Eric works with several terrific Video-Tyme employees.

WORDEN SEATING, HOLLAND: Donna began her training at Worden Seating in Holland this week. She is responsible for cleaning a long hall that connects two buildings of this furniture manufacturer. Donna is "out there working" alot of the time, as she approaches graduation and the transition to adult life in the community.

At right: Donna at  
work her first day  
at Worden Seating.  
Look at that  
confidence!

Donna  
LEE  
~~SEATTLE~~



MC DONALD'S: Donna is in her third year of working at McDonald's. She does a wonderful job making salads, in fact, she should be considered a "pro". This fall when Donna started back at work, we thought her duties should be extended. After speaking with the store manager, Donna's duties were expanded to include cleaning of the lobby area. As a result, Donna works 1/2 hour longer than she did last year on Monday and Wednesday.

HERMAN MILLER: Donna has also returned to Herman Miller this fall. Donna and her coach Joy Brower go to work every Monday and Wednesday from 9:00am - 11:15am.

BIL-MAR FOODS: Ann, a student from the Ottawa Area Center, is also returning to her training site this fall. Ann works in the cafeteria wiping tables. She does a great job and she will be wearing the Bil-Mar uniform this year. Ann and her coach, Melissa Andrews, go to work every Tuesday and Thursday from 11:15am - 1:15pm.

D&W: Mike will soon be starting as a paid employee at D&W. Mike will train with a coach two mornings each week. The uniform is a white shirt and tie, dark pants, and that great D&W nametag and apron. Mike does great things for that uniform, and vice versa! Mike's coach is Judy Parish.

### HATS OFF AWARD!!!

Our "Hats Off Award" this month goes to Eric. Eric is integrated into regular education classes and job sites five out of seven hours each day. All of us are very proud of Eric!!!

### ALL TOGETHER NOW!

-Carol Gray

As the result of a series of events last year, I finally came to a personal realization about my students... These are not my children, and I cannot be with them in the future. Having worked with my students for over ten years, it's healthy for me to recall that saying now and then. It keeps me focused not only on our own efforts, but on some very important people...those who will be with our students in the future.

This fall during selected IEPC's, we had the opportunity to meet some of the "future" professionals. With the cooperation of the Life Services System, a coordinating body for social services in Ottawa



County, we completed current IEPC's with a focus on the future. Our sincere thanks to the representatives from several agencies, our parents, students, and staff who made these meetings such a success.

A Question From Iowa and Texas

We have been asked the same question from subscribers in two states. Are there any summer camps, or residential programs for students with autism (high functioning in particular) that have a strong emphasis on social skills development? We've been asked by individuals who would be very interested in programs that have a comprehensive approach to social skills.

PLEASE write us if you have the answer, and we will gladly print it in our next newsletter. Also, if you have a question that needs our help, send it to us and we'll print it.

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To request materials, or to send us items for THE MORNING NEWS:

Melissa Andrews / Carol Gray  
Jenison Public Schools  
8375 20th  
Jenison, Michigan 49428  
Phone: (616) 457-8955

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If you would like to receive THE MORNING NEWS, clip this form and send to the above address:

Please send THE MORNING NEWS to:

(Please PRINT! your name and address:)

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