

# Community



## The road to their future

Teacher Joanne Allen and Andrew Doherty

By JO ANN STEVENSON  
Times Staff Writer

Twelve-year-old Andrew Doherty manoeuvres his wheel chair into the open foyer of his spacious new school, the \$1.2 million Credit Valley Treatment Centre for Handicapped Children located in Erin Mills.

"I've got lots of new friends in this school already," beams Andrew, as he proudly escorts The Times reporter and photographer through the playground and the new building.

The grounds include a paved path for wheel chairs that winds through a wooded area behind the school. Children roll through gathering autumn leaves at recess, apparently feeling incredibly independent.

On the grounds, there is a fortress of rough logs. Squeals of delight resound through the grounds as handicapped youngsters round the corner declaring an ambush.

But all is not play. An indoor workshop for wood working and crafts is last on the list for completion. "The children are here to learn," says Dianne Thompson, executive director of the centre. "So we stress the three Rs above all else."

The 58 children and teens enrolled at the centre have physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and spina bifida.

"For many of our students, there are no nice neat categories," says Thompson. The centre is geared towards any child who has difficulty with normal movement.

"Our goal at the centre is to help our kids participate fully in community life as active citizens. We hope to en-

courage the community to keep the handicapped in mind when building schools and municipal buildings. Giving them access to the buildings gives them access to community life."

Before this centre was built, most of the students were bussed to similar centres in Hamilton and Toronto. Now the Mississauga facility accommodates children from Halton and Peel who need a flexible school program that provides a large degree of individual attention.

"Many of our students need help with washroom facilities," says Thompson. "We have the staff to attend to that, and the washrooms themselves have rails, wide doors and even low sinks for the junior children who ride in carts at the school."

The funding for the centre is shared by the Peel Board of Education and the provincial government. There are six therapists, two clerical staff, one handyman, three therapy assistants, four nursery school teachers, four school teachers and an executive director on staff.

The centre is the end product of eight years of work.

### IT ALL STARTED . . .

In 1970 parents of handicapped children and others concerned about their future started an association which became chartered as a non-profit organization.

"They received help from almost every local service club," says Thompson. "But the Erindale Mississauga Lions Club spearheaded the fund-raising for the centre."

"The volunteers have started to work now in the classrooms, and the students are buckling down to work," says Thompson. "It has been amazing how quickly everyone was able to fit right in and get on with the business of educating these youngsters."



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