

play with her friends in and out of the school.

THE FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY

Mandy now has friends; I think this is one of the greatest benefits of inclusion. For years I watched Mandy stand alone on the front lawn as all the neighbourhood children rushed by on their way to school or games. I remembered thinking, "Please just one person stop and talk to her; just one of you ask her to play too."

My eyes fill with tears when I remember the first time our doorbell rang and there stood three little girls asking, "Can Mandy come out and play?" The look of pure joy on Mandy's face was a dream come true.

The original group of friends soon more than quadrupled in number. Now Mandy's classmates are the children who speak up and support her; they are her advocates at school and in the playgrounds at home. These children speak proudly of the joys and triumphs they have shared with Mandy, not only at school but in the community. Her classmates call on her to come out to play; they are the friends who invite her to parties and dances and who are anxious to see her at Brownies, gymnastics, figure skating and baseball. These are the children who can't wait to introduce me to their parents as "Mandy's Mom; Mandy — she's in our class".

Integration is more than just education in school. It is a part of everything we do. Mandy's integration does not start and stop in school; she is an active member of her community. Besides belonging to the figure skating club and attending the summer playground programs and gymnastics, Mandy was a Brownie for three years. The Brownie leader admitted that when she first learned that Mandy had enrolled in her pack she was scared. But she said that, once she got to know Mandy, she realized, "There isn't anything she can't do. She's not a problem. We just love her and the kids all look for her on Wednesday nights." Recently, the leader was asked if she had