

any children with special needs in her Brownie pack. She replied, "No". The person asked, "Well don't you have Mandy?" The Brownie leader's response was, "Yes, but she doesn't have special needs. She's just Mandy."

Integration has helped Mandy to see herself as part of the whole. Her Grade 1 teacher told me that one day, during math class, Mandy suddenly stood up and literally picked up her desk. She moved it from the last row by the door to the front row in the middle of the classroom. At the beginning of the period, the kids had been asked to move their desks into groups, but, with good intentions, Mandy's desk had been positioned so that she would not have to move. As the teacher stood there speechless, a little boy at the back of the class put up his hand and said, "Don't be mad at Mandy, she just feels left out."

We quickly realized what Mandy was trying to tell us through her actions. In her own way she was showing us that although she was physically integrated she still felt special or different, an outsider. The other kids recognized this and spoke up on her behalf. Mandy's desk remained in the middle of the classroom, in the front row, for the rest of the school year. The incident also illustrates how Mandy's participation has enhanced the other children's learning processes, providing a creative, accepting, learning environment for every child. In fact, all students have benefitted in many ways from a unified school system in which all learning needs are readily addressed. The supports and resources provided through integration, such as the methods and resource teachers, teacher's aides, peer tutors and cooperative learning groups, are providing valuable assistance to all students in the classroom.

## **A WAY OF LIFE**

Mandy has been accepted and made to feel comfortable and welcome and that she belongs in her neighbourhood and community. She is now recognized as Mandy: a cute little girl