

Middleboro group gets state grant for vocational training in Fairhaven

FAIRHAVEN — A Middleboro group has been awarded a \$125,000 state contract to operate a vocational skills training center for mentally retarded adults at the former Job C. Tripp School.

The Nemasket Group of Middleboro, which received the state Department of Mental Health contract Monday, will be opening a job training center at the former elementary school to serve 20 adults, age 22 and older, beginning in mid-February. The center is expected to serve students from Dartmouth to Buzzards Bay.

"It is a real exciting moment for many of us," said Fairhaven banker George Graves, who originally generated the idea of establishing a center for Southeastern Massachusetts. Chapter 766, the state legislation that provides education for special need students, does not cover

them beyond age 21, but there has been a recognized need for education beyond that point.

Louis Nisenbaum, executive director of the Nemasket Group, said the new center hopes to provide a training center to teach handicapped adults job skills and also work within the community to help place students in jobs.

Nisenbaum, who has been involved for several years in education for students with challenging disabilities and three other professionals formally, organized the Nemasket Group this summer as a non-profit group to develop new programs for the handicapped.

Nisenbaum, state and town officials and the media toured the Tripp School Monday to review plans for the center.

The center is expected to grow to handle 30-35 clients in its second

year, when operational funding is expected to grow to \$193,000.

Graves, who has a 21-year-old handicapped son, and state Sen. William Q. MacLean Jr., D-Fairhaven, who was instrumental in obtaining funds for the center, said supporters of the program are soliciting contributions and in-kind services for renovations needed at the school. About \$30,000 in materials probably is needed.

MacLean noted that several businesses and labor groups already have donated supplies and labor. He said contributions, which are tax deductible, can be made through Graves at the Fairhaven Savings Bank in the name of the Association of Retarded Citizens—Tripp School Project.

"I think it's a solid project," MacLean said. "It's good use of the school and it is really serving a community need."