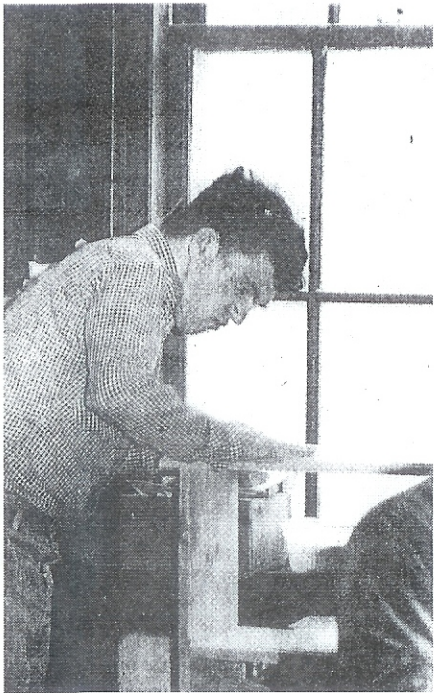


Spark for Tripp School Project Came from Mason Burt Educator



Craftsmanship – David Graves gives a smooth finish to a bookshelf he built in a woodworking shop at Mason Burt School in Acushnet. David, the son of George and Joan Graves of Fairhaven, will move up to the Over-22 program at the Tripp School, a project sparked by a suggestion from educator Jim Dunn.

As many Fairhaven residents are aware by now, the Nemasket Group has come to town, taken over the Tripp School and developed a continuing-education program for handicapped adults over the age of 22. It is due to begin operation in early 1985.

Inspiration for the program came from Jim Dunn, program coordinator of the Mason Burt

School's special needs program, which has been in existence for the past 12 years. Dunn had been extremely concerned that many of the participants in his program "had nowhere to go" once they left Mason Burt School in Acushnet, because no program existed for young retarded adults once they reached age 22.

Fairhaven Banker George Graves, whose son David, 21, attends the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative Program at Mason Burt, founded the Nemasket Group-Tripp School project along with his wife, Joan.

Jim Dunn's program is an expertly-run, small-scale vocational school in itself. The teen-agers who attend the program are recommended by their schools for various reasons; these include behavioral or family problems, learning disabilities, or trouble with academics and motivation. Even extremely bright students who simply have difficulty functioning in the standard classroom atmosphere can be found in Dunn's program.

The Mason Burt program has met with excellent results. Many students have been able to go back and function well in regular classrooms after attending the program. Some handicapped

persons have gone on to become teachers and nurses.

The atmosphere at Mason Burt is one of bustling enthusiasm. The students are heartily involved in such projects as carpentry, bicycle repairing, art and design, metal working, small engine repairing, and photography. Students choose the skills they wish to develop, and most are accepted into the program they choose.

Dunn feels that the experience, as well as the confidence, that the students acquire in the program is invaluable.

"They're doing something concrete; they can see the results of their efforts – the finished product, which helps tremendously to encourage motivation," he said. Many of the students go on to vocational schools with a head start – they are already familiar with certain trades and techniques, and that helps build their self-confidence. Dunn considers low self-esteem one of the common denominators among the students.

Hands-on experience with measurements for a woodworking class helps students understand the practical value of studying mathematics as an academic subject – they've already learned how useful it can be.

Other skills taught at Mason Burt include behaving

appropriately "on the job," handling job interviews, filling out job applications and putting together resumes.

The program also offers professional counseling, which Dunn considers an important part of the students' progress. Counseling is career-oriented, and counselors are also available for the discussion of personal problems.

According to Dunn, the primary goal of the program – "the ideal thing" – would be for students to stay for one or two years, or as long as necessary, and then to be reintegrated into a regular school system where their individual needs could be met.

Among all the students, a feeling of genuine interest, camaraderie, and family is apparent. Also apparent are the energetic enthusiasm, contentment and sense of purpose of the young people.

Not every child fits neatly into our public school systems as they are presently structured. The special needs program at the Mason Burt School, guided by Jim Dunn, accepts those children and offers them the individual attention and care they need in order to develop to their full potential.

The Educational Collaborative is a program that works – producing confident, capable, skilled individuals who are a credit to their society.