

# Library growing one book at a time

By COLLEEN MORIARTY  
Middletown Press Correspondent

MIDDLETOWN — Just One Book can make a difference.

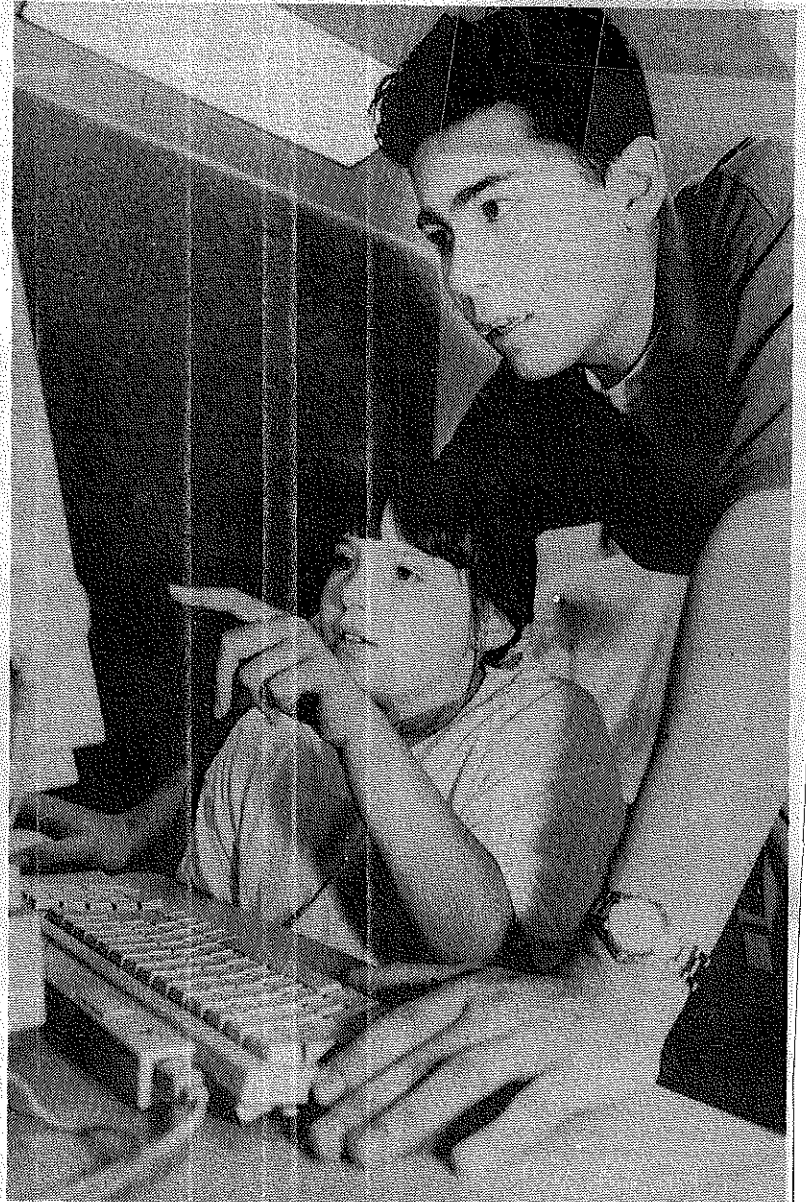
To prove it, the Community Health Center at 635 Main St. is collecting books that inspire, intrigue or motivate as part of a smorgasbord library for community children.

The Just One Book program aims to collect that one book that community members would want the next generation to read and enjoy. Each book will be shelved downstairs in the center where the children's programming rooms are located.

"It's an inspirational library ... We don't want your attic. We're not into volume. We're into quality." Mark Masselli, president and founder of the Community Health Center, said. The center provides residents with a variety of medical and social services.

Masselli said he does not want the shelves full of hundreds of books that were only read as an educational regime in high school or college. Instead, the collection will feature meaningful books that can change lives.

Books will be read by community children who participate in the Homeroom Study Hall during the school year. The Homeroom, which begins this fall, will be open from 3 to 9 p.m. for students (See CHILDREN'S, Page 8)



Adam Nadel / Middletown Press Staff

Coral Blake, 10, of Middletown, gets some assistance from Roy McDonald, a Trinity College student spending his summer as a computer instructor at the Community Health Center in Middletown. The downstairs portion of the Main Street center has been converted into a facility which will be used in the fall as a computer lab, library and reading room. Although empty book shelves now line the walls of the center's children's programming area, the Just One Book program is now under way to collect special books for the children's library.

#1452

# Children's library grows one book at a time

(Continued from Page 1)

to learn, read and study in a quiet environment conducive to education, Masselli explained.

Masselli hopes the books donated will include inscriptions explaining why the book was given and describing its positive nature.

"It's like a time capsule," he said, explaining the written messages would make the books "real" even before the children start to read the text.

The books may be in any language and at any reading level for students from 7 to 17 years of age. Masselli said new books will also be welcome.

Empty book shelves now line the walls of the center's children's pro-

gramming area. Even after they're filled, however, book reading will be just one of activity in the Homeroom center.

The children's center also has four Macintosh computers complete with CD Read Only Memory (ROM) storage capabilities for the children's use. Masselli said mentors from the community and Middlesex Community-Technical College and Wesleyan University would help students with homework.

The Community Health Center invested \$45,000, Masselli said, to renovate the center's 1,500 square feet in the basement area and to purchase computers and other equipment. He said the center anticipates spending \$10,000 more for other

purchases.

Children in the high-tech Homeroom program will also be able to experiment with creative writing, music instruction and arts appreciation, and basic Japanese, Masselli said. The center will be open Monday through Saturday.

"The idea is strong enough to attract a lot of people," Masselli said.

He expects that 20 to 30 children could attend Homeroom at one time. The Homeroom is open to anyone in the community regardless of age or residence location, he said, although the program is geared toward students.

"We can't rely strictly on the

school systems for the educational needs of children," Masselli said.

"I see kids being lost. I just see everyday in the neighborhood children who don't have the resources but are extremely curious and bright. Many children in our neighborhood don't go home to a computer, to an area with appropriate resources to focus in on education and learning."

Without programs, "I think they would be watching what's going on in the streets and getting a different type of education . . . one that I wouldn't recommend," he said. "We want to open up a different window of opportunity for them."

Masselli and his wife Jennifer

have a 16-month-old son named Tenzin. Since the child's birth, he said, he can see "advantages he has" over other children. "There are too many inequalities these children face, and it isn't fair."

The Homeroom will be run by Masselli and Home Base Services Director Ron Torok. "The child who has resources is as welcome here as the child who doesn't. Both of those children need each other," Masselli said.

Single book donations can be mailed to the Community Health Center at 635 Main St. or the Middle-town Press (which is co-sponsoring the collection) at 2 Main St., Middletown, 06457. Contact Masselli at 347-6971 for more information.