

ECONOMIST & SUN/TRIBUNE

AT THE SCHOOLS

I'm trying to keep my dreams alive

Until recently I've thought of the world as a place of relative peace and harmony.

I believed — as I am sure many of you have — that we lived in a utopian society free of fear and chaos. But the events on and since Sept. 11, 2001 have made me think otherwise.

Perhaps it's just the harsh reality of growing up, but I've come to realize my mom won't always be there to set things right. Especially when the thing that needs righting is the world.

Since the overwhelming devastation of the U.S. terrorist attacks, thousands of people have lost their lives and thousands more might, if Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein doesn't accept the United Nation Security Council's demand that weapons inspectors have free and unfettered access to anywhere in Iraq.

My fear is without full co-operation, the U.S. and some of its allies will have no choice but to declare war on Iraq.

This in turn may result in a third world war. Something I could never even fathom.

I sat at home flipping through TV channels showing Remembrance Day ceremonies, not thinking anything would interest me. Suddenly the image of a fallen soldier flashed across my screen. I stopped and watched.

Bombs crashed and bullets flew by, but these men stood resilient knowing any hesitation or wrong move could result in their death, and the deaths of those around them.

The picture quickly



Rick Schie

At the Schools Writer

changed to a quiet field lined with graves.

As the camera moved slowly about, one grave came into focus and caught my eye. I did the math and realized the person in that grave was only 16. One year older than me.

I could never picture myself going to war and when I turned my back I or the man beside me could be killed where we stood.

I can only imagine having my life flash before my eyes and thinking of the tremendous pain it would cause my family.

And yet, millions of people only months older than me face this fear every day.

I'm not sure how long I sat there and contemplated that concept. I do know that it was dark before I could drag my thoughts back to the present.

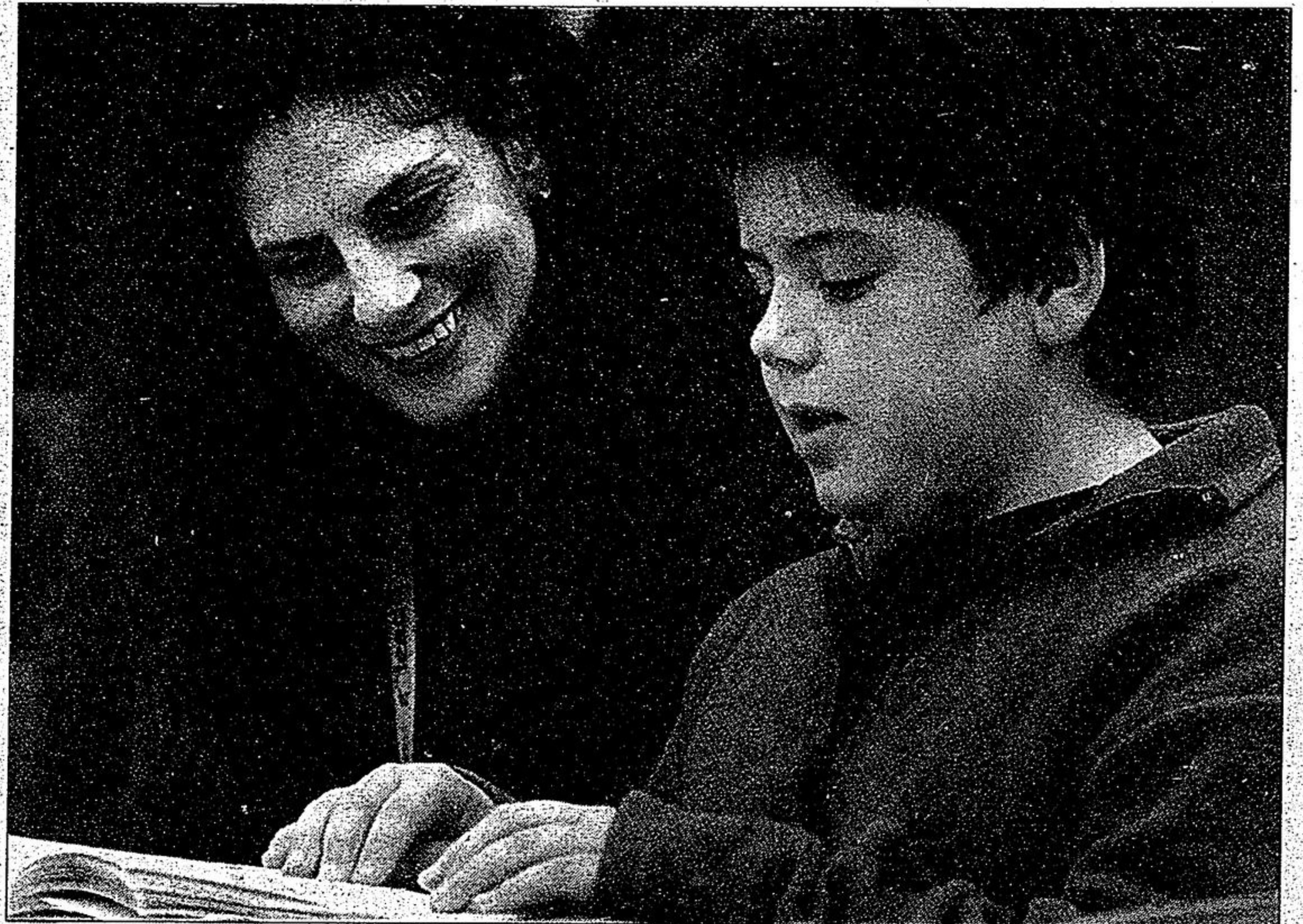
I used to believe our society had evolved, perhaps naively thinking something like war could never happen again.

But with every passing day my greatest nightmares are becoming reality.

I ask this of politicians everywhere: Please help me keep my dreams — and not my nightmares — alive.

Rick Schie is a student at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School in Unionville.

Nevia DeAcetis, a Grade 5 teacher at St. Mark Catholic School in Stouffville, uncovered Alex Fiorini's dyslexia, which was impairing his ability to read and write, despite his obvious intelligence.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Teacher opens door to literacy

BY JEROME WATT
Staff Writer

Nevia DeAcetis, a Grade 5 teacher at St. Mark Catholic School in Stouffville, ended a nightmare for 10-year-old Alex Fiorini.

No matter how hard he tried, Alex couldn't get the hang of reading and writing.

That is, until Ms. DeAcetis suggested he had dyslexia, a diagnosis confirmed by experts a short while later. Dyslexia is a condition that makes it difficult to properly interpret written language and is not related to intelligence.

"It was pretty hard," Alex said. "Some of the words that looked hard and big turned out to be easy."

The diagnosis ended years of aggravation for Alex and his family.

In the past, teachers had suggested he would outgrow the problem. The family hired a tutor for Alex, but still he struggled. He also had his eyes checked.

"The doctor told us he needed glasses to correct his vision," his mother, Lynn, said. "He said, 'When he gets these glasses his marks will go through the roof.' We waited and waited. His marks didn't improve."

The struggle took its toll on Alex. He

had always been a good-natured boy, but his mother could see a change in his demeanour.

"It was very frustrating as parents," she said. "He was getting frustrated because he couldn't do it. We'd end up fighting and crying. They weren't able to find the cause — up until now."

Now he can get help for his condition.

"Just the fact that Alex knows he's a bright kid and he just has to learn differently makes him happy," Lynn said. "Now he knows he's not stupid."

Ms. DeAcetis said she's just doing her job and doesn't deserve any accolades.

"I don't deserve this," she said of being named York Region Newspaper Group's teacher of the month for November. "It's really Alex. He's a great kid. I wanted him to show it."

Her reward is seeing her students do well.

"It's so nice to see them succeed," she said. "That's everything to me."

Alex is a bright student, Ms. DeAcetis said, he was doing well orally but, when it came to reading and writing, he struggled.

"Here's a kid who knows his stuff," she said. "It's just hard to see letters upside down."

Ms. DeAcetis said Alex is enjoying school a lot more these days.

"His self-confidence is a lot better," she said. "He's a lot happier now."

Ms. DeAcetis had experiences similar to those of Alex when she was in Grade 5 and is just carrying on the tradition.

"I was a kid who struggled," she said. "The teacher spent her time with me. She boosted my confidence. I saw her do the same thing with other kids, too. I want to give back what was given to me."

Alex said not only did Ms. DeAcetis identify his problem, she also made learning fun.

"She's got a good sense of humour," he said. "She gives us really fun work. She'll give you a chance to co-operate in class."

Ms. DeAcetis and her class will receive a pizza lunch from Pizza Pizza at Hwy. 48 and 16th Avenue in Markham, flowers from Lindy's Floral Boutique, 6287 Main St., Stouffville, a workshop to improve communication skills by Inside Out with Karen Armstrong and a hardcover book, *Teacher of the Year*, from Contemporary Books, published by McGraw-Hill, filled with 400 insightful quotes from America's greatest teachers. If you would like to nominate your teacher for December, please submit a brief letter describing why your teacher is tops by Dec. 12. See our address on page 6.



INSIGHT INTO EYESIGHT

DO YOU SUFFER FROM DRY EYES?

Dry, red, itchy, burning, watery, tired eyes could be symptoms of what is called 'Dry Eye syndrome'.

Dry Eye Syndrome is a disorder of tear deficiency or lack of tears on your eyes that leads to the above symptoms. There are five common causes: An overactive tear drainage system. Aging eyes naturally become dry eyes, dry working, recreational and home environments, Contact Lens wearing, Medications such as antihistamines and beta blockers.

Depending on the severity of your problem, the common range of options are supplemental artificial tears and tear gels.

At best, artificial tear drops or even tear gels can only temporarily soothe symptoms of dry eyes. They have to be applied several times during the day and night.

A safe and effective, but less well-known treatment is using small well-fitting tear plugs to close your overactive tear ducts. By blocking the tear drainage ducts, more natural infection-fighting tears bathe and soothe dry eyes. This non-surgical method is the most effective way to provide long-term relief of your dry eyes.

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