

help Eric with things like bathing. Concerns such as personal hygiene keep some families from choosing group homes. Helen Shkymba decided to keep her daughter, Ginger, at home in Princes Bay. After her parents die, Ginger is probably going to live with her sister and her family, Mrs. Shkymba said.

"I have nothing against group homes per se," said Mrs. Shkymba. She agreed they are the best choice available when children and parents must separate. But she said that having her daughter at home is no trouble, and she doesn't think Ginger, now 48, could adjust to living in a group home.

Mrs. Shkymba said she would worry that her daughter was not cared for as well as she is at home. Although Ginger is able to bathe independently, for example, Mrs. Shkymba said she does need to be supervised and assisted. "Who is going to take the time to do that?" she asked. "I don't know, maybe in a group home, they would."

Ginger attends a sheltered workshop, which she loves, and also is active in several recreation programs, Mrs. Shkymba

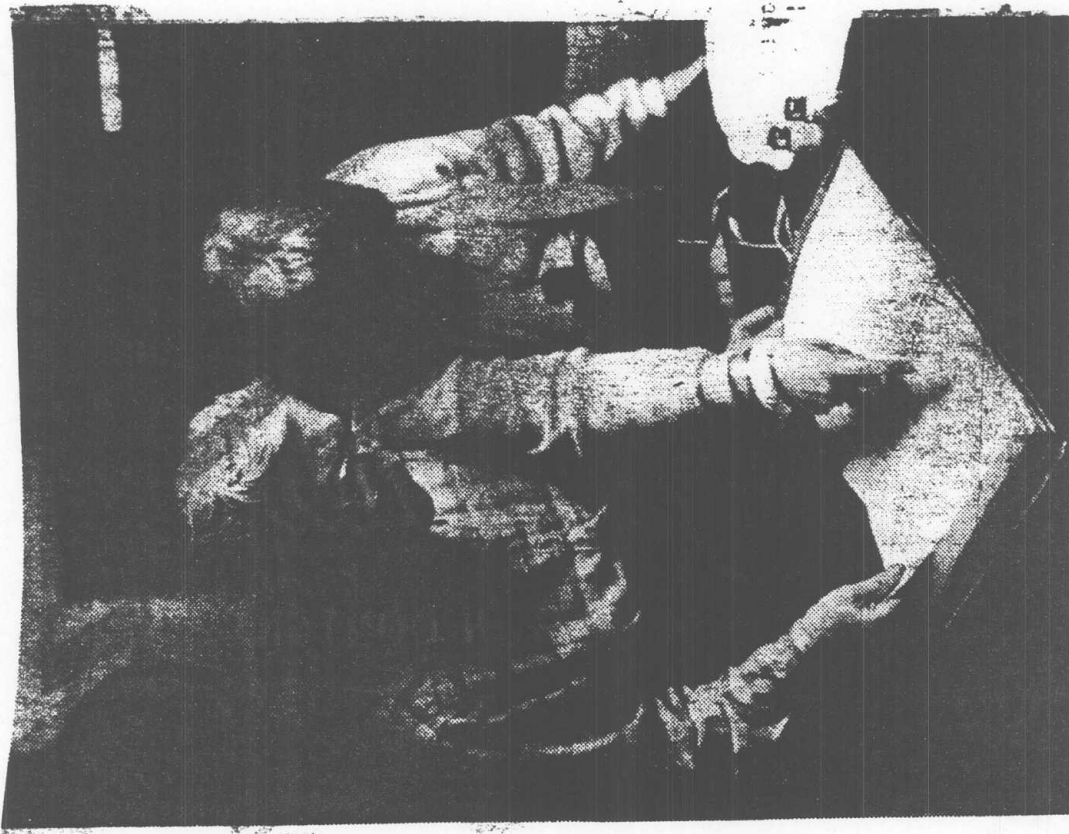
said. "We hardly see her.

Ginger did try to stay at a respite program last year while her parents were away on vacation, but Mrs. Shkymba said that after a few days, she became hysterical and ended up staying at her sister's home for the remainder of the week. It wasn't worth repeating that again this year, she said, so Ginger simply stayed with her sister.

Mrs. Panzella said her son likes to come back to visit his parents' home, but he also likes to go back to the group home. She said his visits are often cut shorter than planned because he asks to leave. Benny is very concerned about his housemates, she said, and often when their routines change. "They concern themselves with each other," she said.

Mrs. Coull remarked that people with developmental disabilities are much more accepting of each other than even their families are. "Part of what we do is forever try to make them into something normal," she said. "They accept each other much more than we do." "It's a very loving setting," she added.

— Last of a series.



ADVANCE PHOTO/MIKE PALCO

Ginger Shkymba shows her mother, Helen, what she has been doing in school.

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