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Family counseling balances the system, strengthens the ties

By LORRAINE McCLURE

'We want to see the children work this all out before they carry any of the destructive stuff they are carrying around with them into their own families.'

—Connie Abramson,
Houston-Abramson Associates

If you are contemplating going to a counselor, it may save you both time and money if you take the whole family along, say the team of Houston-Abramson, who are working in on therapy for the family as a unit.

Betty Houston, of 3758 Franklin Road, Southfield, says "It cuts through hours of individual counseling and gets to the heart of the problem very quickly."

Her partner, Connie Abramson, of 3122 Oak Valley, Farmington, adds, "It's an opportunity for everybody in the family to say where they're at, to state how they think and feel. Everybody is confronted, but in a very comfortable situation, to work out their conflicts without blame or guilt. No body loses."

Each of the women had an impressive background of counseling experience before they teamed up to open Houston-Abramson Associates at 2322 Orchard Lake Road, in Farmington.

IN ADDITION to working with workshops and ongoing groups in the Orchard Building, Ms. Houston now teaches TA (transactional analysis) for teachers at Oakland University and works with children and families for the Pontiac Public School System.

Ms. Abramson works with adolescents and families through the Farmington Area Advisory Council.

The two have devised an eclectic program for family therapy, choosing what they deem to be the best sources for most effectiveness. TA concepts, bio-energies, and their combined case work backgrounds.

Their experience has shown them, they said, that it is very common for an entire family unit to gang up on one member, and point a finger at him as being the trouble maker.

"And this is not necessarily so," said Ms. Abramson, "generally all the others are hurting as well and it is important that we as counselors reach all these others."

Ms. Abramson sketched a picture of a mobile with its hanging pendants representing each member of the family to illustrate what she called "unbalancing the family system."

When one of the mobile pendants shifts, because one person in the family unit has successfully made a change, "then everybody has to shift. It is now necessary to

create a new balance," she said.

Another advantage, for the counselor to better do his job, in meeting the entire family, was cited by Ms. Houston who told of listening to a woman describe her husband over a long period. When she finally met the husband, she said there wasn't one facet of his personality she would have recognized from his wife's description.

THE TWO WORK on the assumption that "everybody wants to love and wants to be loved, yet a lot of us have a screwy way of realizing this," Ms. Houston said.

They find fragmented families as one of the prime sources of problems in today's society and "do everything we can to strengthen the ties," Ms. Houston said. When she spoke about fragmented families, she meant both geographically and physically.

One of the ways they use to help family members better understand one another is through sculpting a family tree, so

the children can see where their parents stand in their family unit for a better insight into what their parents are, and that they themselves want.

"We want to see the children work this all out before they carry any of the destructive stuff they are carrying around with them into their own families," Ms. Abramson said.

"It's a neat way to learn your family history and the children are free to go back and forth until they are ready to go for good, off their own."

GETTING AN ENTIRE family together for counseling is, in many instances, not easy. Resistance is liable to come from one member or another claiming it's not his problem, but somebody else's. Resistance can come simply because change is not easy.

"Change can be risky or downright scary," Ms. Houston says. "But we have to learn to create different people; bring up our children in a different way so they

can emerge with less problems."

The key to all living, Ms. Abramson says, "is dealing with whatever happens in an effective way. It's not what happens that matters, but how you deal with it. We are in charge of all of our lives and we do have control over these changes through our feelings."

Ms. Houston and Mrs. Abramson met one another in a training group, then took more training together on the west coast at an institute which is doing work on family counseling.

During that interim period, Mrs. Abramson took her entire family to California for a therapy session, "and that was my stamp. That was my confirmation that this was the way to go," she said.

THE SUMMER CALENDAR for Houston-Abramson Associates lists a monthly minibus, workshop on divorce and being single, growth groups and mothers' groups.

The monthly minibus is a day long Sat-

urday session with fee that includes lunch geared to help you get in touch with yourself and experience personal awareness and continued growth.

When asked what one could expect to derive from attending such a session, Ms. Abramson likened the experience to peeling the skins off of an onion.

"It all depends on how many layers you want to peel away," she said. "Every skin you take off is going to reveal another new piece of unfinished business for you and help you get into more of your own feelings."

The two women claim that for all the study that has been done on the family sociologically, very little has been done studying how the family functions and grows as a system.

Ms. Abramson has introduced family counseling, with her co-leader, Greg Young, into the Farmington Area Advisory Council, and is "sure others are doing it somewhere, but if it is around here we haven't heard of them."



Counselors Betty Houston, (left) and Connie Abramson, advocate kicking off your shoes and getting comfortable in their room fur-

nished for helping you get in touch with yourself, gaining personal awareness and growth.

Doctor eyes elimination of myopia

By ROSE WEBER

Myopia or nearsightedness, the inability to see objects clearly at a distance, is usually treated by the prescription of corrective lenses either in the form of eyeglasses or contact lenses.

Anthony Potts, D.O., an optometrist

with offices in the Medical Square Condominium in Troy, is using a therapy technique called orthokeratology which he claims can correct myopia.

Following therapy, 50 per cent of his patients can see without glasses, classes of contact lenses. 50 per cent must wear a retainer lens for two or three hours a day, three times a

week. The optometrist said a new science in eye care, orthokeratology, provides corrective eye care through the therapeutic use of contact lenses.

The patient first receives a thorough examination of the eyes to be sure no disease is present and the

exact extent of the myopia," explained Dr. Potts.

THE PATIENT is then fitted with standard contact lenses ground to the proper prescription for vision correction.

When wearing time has been increased to 10 hours of wear without discomfort, Dr. Potts then begins changing the lens conformation about every three months, depending on the degree of improvement of vision.

"During the two years of therapy the patient will go through five or six lens changes," he said.

Each time the lenses are changed they are ground to slightly less curvature than the original corneal curvature. The cornea gradually conforms to the pressure of the contact lens with a resultant improvement in vision.

Finally a retainer lens ground to the new conformation of the cornea and without prescription is worn for a period of six months to insure that the eye does not return to its former shape.

REGULAR CHECKUPS are scheduled once a year after the corneal correction is completed.

Depending on the severity of the myopia it is possible to correct the vision to normal 20/20. 20/240 is the most severe degree that can be brought back to normal. But eyes with more severe defects can be aided so that the patient feels less helpless when he isn't wearing corrective lenses," the optometrist said.

Zan Holland, Dr. Potts' optical technician, and a patient, has progressed to the retainer lens stage.

"I felt the corrective lenses were more comfortable than the normal contact lenses I had always worn. I never had any discomfort with either

kind, however," she said. Enthusiastic about the therapy, Ms. Holland emphasized that proper care of the eye and the lenses was important.

Following fitting by the doctor, Ms. Holland instructs each patient in proper insertion, position, removal and care of the lens.

Ms. Holland also shows the patients a film on eye care so they get the story twice. Some of our patients who have worn contact lenses before have to have some bad habits broken before we can go into therapy," Dr. Potts explained.

ORTHOKERATOLOGY was developed in 1962 with research and development continuing under the auspices of the national Eye Research Foundation.

Dr. Potts began using the procedure while in the Navy in San Diego five years ago.

Several young men wanted to get into the Air Force Academy but couldn't meet the vision requirements until after orthokeratology therapy, the optometrist said.

He added that he is not aware of any regression of vision in cases completed 10 years ago.

Dr. Potts said he is most concerned with the correction of myopia in children. He has patients as young as 10 years who are successfully receiving therapy.

And although he has some patients who are past 40 years, Dr. Potts believes the procedure is most successful when begun at an early age. And he accepts only cases without diseases or indication of possible glaucoma, astigmatism or far-sightedness.

NOT ALL EYE doctors are in favor of the procedure, however. A prominent area ophthalmologist said he



DR. ANTHONY POTTS

would not do it because he felt pushing on the cornea imposed certain risks such as ulcers.

The procedure is as old as the hills but I don't let the optometrist work in my office for it and is fully aware of the risks," he said. Dr. Potts said he was aware of the desirability within the profession. "But there has not been one sign of ulcers or other damage in 30,000 reported cases."

The optometrist said there can be corneal abrasion or scarring with ordinary contact lenses if improper use and or care is employed.

"That is why we have an hour and a half of instruction. I want them to know when they walk out of the office the dangers involved," he said.

HE ADDED THAT any optometrist, has to appear before a board that is (Continued on page 8E)



Optical technician and patient Zan Holland instructs each patient in proper care and use of the lens.

Court Theatre magic with 'Fantasticks'

By ETHEL SIMMONS

As a setting for the Court Theatre, the Detroit Institute of Arts Kresge Court has lost none of its magic. "The Fantasticks," candlelight supper theater offering, is a visual delight. Songs in this memorable show that had a 17-year-run off Broadway (and just closed this spring) make it a timeless pleasure. "Try to Remember . . . when you were calling . . . and follow the dream." The musical's book and lyrics are by Tom Jones, music by Harvey Schmidt.

K. K. Harper (Luisa), who co-stars with Edward Coulter (Matt) as the idealistic young lovers, also did the choreography, and nice job of it, too. Ms. Harper is pretty, with beautiful long blond hair. She certainly looks the part of the girl, who declares, "In 16 years old and every day something happens to me and I don't know what to make of it."

SHE SINGS SWEETLY, acts nicely but is dressed too babyish, even for a fantasy. Her Alice in Wonderland outfit is a yellow dress with puffed sleeves and matching headband.

Her co-star, also handles well his role of the man "nearly 20" who loves her. Coulter is red-headed, casually dressed and thoroughly amiable. His singing voice makes good listening.

My main complaint about the lovers, who must surmount their fathers' rage to bring them together by keeping them apart, is that they didn't seem to really interact.

I didn't feel they had a romance going — it was more like a romance with the audience. Also, maybe due to opening night, the pace of the show seemed off, too fast rather than a more likely problem of being too slow.

As the fathers, Mark Atchison (Hucklebee) and Peter Palm (Bellamy) had an easy romp. These straw-

hatted, suspended and vest characters get the comic songs, one about their phony feud ("to manipulate children, you just say no") and "That's why I love vegetables . . . with children, you don't know until the seed is nearly down what you've grown."

WITH ITS BASICALLY bare stage, "The Fantasticks" relies on some clever and simple devices that appeal to the imagination more strongly than sets.

First, there are a couple of characters that just take over the show. One portrays the garden "wall" separating the boy and girl, yet bringing them together, where they meet. Michael Haley (The Mute) wears white makeup, a black top hat, white tie and black leotard.

He stands motionless for long periods, moves in to supply the right touch: Sprinkling silver rain on the lovers' heads as they sing, "Let it rain." Other

props changing the time or season include a disk that is the moon on one side, reversing to the sun, hung on a hook.

Timothy Schoch as another character (the Narrator, or Bandit, El Gallo) is the bad guy in black. Sombre, staid, thin, studied belt and trousers. But he's kind of like the Fonz, helping the principals along one way or another. The fathers hire him for a phony rape, or abduction, so the boy can rescue the girl and they can live happily ever after.

Life has a way of intertwining with the best of schemes. Before you know it, the lovers quarrel, he goes in search of an episode and finds despair, she almost succumbs to glittering decadence with the Bandit. El Gallo has style, and even dies with flair.

ALSO IN THE cast are Paul Teruoncio (Henry) and Martin McDev (Mortimer) as a couple of delightful

fellows who pop up out of a box whenever needed to further the plot.

A reprise of "Try to Remember" reminds us of human failing and challenge. "Who understands why we all must die a bit before we grow again?"

The story has sentiment, touched with irony, and Audley Grossman, curator of the Theatre Arts Department, admits to being "an incurable romantic," one reason for his choice of this popular attraction. Court Theatre was inaugurated by Grossman 10 years ago and just revived. Performances are Wednesdays through Sundays, twice on Saturdays, until Aug. 8.

Grossman also chose the menu for the dinner, and it was the most elegant I've had at dinner theater in the metropolitan Detroit area. It would stand up as a fine meal anywhere.

Waiters in red and white checked shirts, white pants served the diners seated at wrought iron tables covered

with red and white checked tablecloths.

QUICHE LORRAINE, the country French dish of cheese, ham and onion, was the main course, in a generous wedge. It was accompanied by chunks of fresh orange and green melon, pineapple, watermelon and strawberries.

A salad of spinach, watercress and mushrooms preceded the entrée. A carafe of chablis was on the table. Dessert was a chocolate mousse. Coffee was served in matching china white and gold demitasse cups.

This light meal is surprisingly filling, but just in case you want more, between the acts you can order a cheese and fruit plate in the lobby. Thick slices of several good cheeses are cut, along with stoned wheat thins and a crisp halved apple, on a wooden board to take to your table.