✓ Do you own a will, ✓ adequate savings, ✓ in a safe place?

By JEANNE WHITTAKER
Suburban Life Editor

'This is not just a concern of the wealthy. The smaller the estate the less room there is for a margin of error.'
–John A. Gilray, Jr., attorney

Perky, dark-haired Sue Marx broke into a big grin when she asked what April reminded us of the most. Was it wet raincoats? How about early bird golfers on a muddy course? Or maybe kites stuck in bare trees. Probably income tax deadlines, she reminded.

Not on your life, she said. April, for the past 19 years, has been Family Affairs Month, the time when individuals, families and couples should take time out to have a close look at their financial affairs and establish a plan for future security and retirement.

Birmingham lawyer John A. Gilray Jr., a partner in Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, and chairman of this year's month-long look at finances, echoed Susie's comments.

He noted that a 10-year study recently made in Oakland County showed only 40 per cent of the residents who died had wills. Even more shocking, he said, less than 30 per cent of the lawyers had wills.

"This is not just a concern of the wealthy," he said in his office on the top floor of Birmingham's Wabeek Building. "The smaller the estate, the less room for error.

"It's not just a tax concern," he said. "It's a concern of dealing with property in the event of incompetence, incapacity or death in the most economical and effective way."

Family Affairs Month, which began 19 years ago, is sponsored by members of the legal, accounting, insurance, banking, savings and loan associations throughout Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties as a public service.

It is, he said, a way of alerting people to get assets organized, identified and arranged in the most effective manner for the protection of their families.

"It's won wide acceptance and is totally subsidized by the participants," Gilray explained.

TO MAKE IT easier for interested residents, Gilray suggests they pick up a Family Affairs Check List, which is available in banks and savings and loan offices. On the list are questions such as "Are your important papers kept together in a safe place?"

"In too many cases, they aren't," he noted.

Also, the questionnaire asks if someone—wife or older children—know where these papers are. Other questions are: "Do you have some cash in a savings account which you could fall back on in an emergency?" and "Could you accurately write down your net worth?"

Other topics for consideration, said Jim Maunders, author of the questionnaire, are how young couples plan for their retirement, retirement planning for a 50-year-old career woman, early retirement planning, and even how much one member of a couple knows about the other's financial affairs.

"Does your husband have a Swiss bank account that you don't know about?" he asks. "If he is still trying to shelter you from the burden of bill paying, insurance reviewing and financial planning, he is doing the entire family a disservice. If he dies suddenly and leaves an unprepared spouse, problems are sure to arise."

"Once they have filled out the form, the next step is to talk to a banker, savings and loan officer, or a life insurance agent," Gilray said. "They might also talk to a CPA or attorney. Any one of them could determine whether they need to have their affairs planned.

"For instance, the professional could tell from the responses on the check list whether liability insurance or life insurance is adequate, or if provisions for dependents are in need of improvement."

HE ALSO stresses that the program is not intended as a means of drumming up business for the professionals.

"It's fair to say the professionals involved are obligated to give the public the benefit of their insights," he said. "This is voluntary. Nobody is compensated for putting this drive together."

The chairmanship, he explained, is rotated among the professions. In other years the chairmanship has been held by Tom Ricketts, president of Standard Federal Savings and Loan; B. James Theodoroff, executive vice-president of Detroit Bank and Trust; Edwin G. Olsen, a partner in Arthur Young & Co.; and Jules L. Pallone, president of the Maccabees Mutual Life Insurance Co.

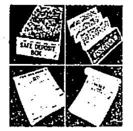
But, what about the person, whether young or old, affluent or just getting started, who has established no contacts in any of these fields?

"The best place for them to go to get help is the trust department of any bank. There new business people and other personnel are available without fee and are knowledgable about the identity of competent people in all the related areas. The larger the trust department, the more officers they have to be of assistance," Gilray said.

"I'd say that they are a repository of wisdom because all things are funneled through them. You've got to realize that these fields have all become highly specialized. The quality of the product is a function of the degree of specialization, whether CPA, trust officer or other. That's why I suggest that where there are questions, the trust officer is a good person to begin with."

Family Affairs Check List

Everyone should have a plan for his retirement and for his family's future financial security. This sheet will help you decide whether you have such a plan.



ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
[illegible]	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

Check list questionnaire, which is available this month in banks and savings and loan offices, is handy way to determine whether an individual or couple needs assistance in putting their affairs in order. Recent survey revealed that less than 50 per cent of area residents died and left wills.

Mercy students shine in safety poster contest

Our Lady of Mercy students once again walked away with the top prizes in the annual traffic safety poster contest sponsored by the Automobile Club of Michigan.

Six of the 21 state winners who received U.S. savings bonds were Mercy students. The top awards received by the Farmington students were for various poster themes submitted in the senior and junior divisions.

Among the 3,500 entries from across Michigan, 257 were submitted by Mercy students, says Sr. Mary Ignatius, art instructor.

First place winners who receive $100 savings bonds are Kathleen Reilly, 9th grade student and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Reilly of Detroit, and Eileen McCarthy, 9th grade student and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond McCarthy of Farmington Hills.

"Yield Right of Way to Other Road Users" was Ms. Reilly's theme, while Ms. McCarthy's poster was under the theme "Cyclists—Keep Right to be Right."

Second place winners who received $75 savings bonds were Ann Marie Nido, senior, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Nido of Southfield; and Lisa Johnson, 9th grade student and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Johnson of Detroit.

Both students chose the subject "Cyclists—Keep Right to be Right."

Third place awards of $25 savings bonds went to Patricia Young, junior, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Young of Livonia for "Yield Right of Way to Other Road Users" and Karen Klimkowski, 9th grade student and daughter of Dr. and Mr. Edward Klimkowski of West Bloomfield, for "Cylists—Keep Right to be Right."

The young Michigan artists will receive their awards at a special presentation in May following announcement of winners in the national competition.

Sidney Harris speaks at OCC

Oakland Community College, in cooperation with the Michigan Council for the Humanities, will present a series of forums by well known local and national experts. The theme of the series is humanizing education. All events are open to the public free of charge. Tickets are not required.

Sydney J. Harris, long time staff member on the Chicago Daily News and author of a daily column on the editorial page of the Chicago Sun Time will be the major speaker at a forum on Humanism: An Exploration in Learning, April 15. The forum will be from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., in Room J-306 of OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus, Farmington Hills.