

# Cops blame courts for leniency in dealing with child abusers

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County's Children Village but the county probate court referee, who usually handles such cases, has the child returned home the next day. The trio moves to Wayne County.

It's far from the first time a mother has passed the blame onto a boyfriend, according to Harris.

"Lousy mothers should get an Emmy for their performance in court. They cry, 'Oh my baby, my baby.' And the referees believe them," said Harris.

As in the case of the three sisters who pitched in to help one of them avoid a beating for unfinished housework, some abuse cases involve an entire family watching the harm that comes to a singled-out child, according to police.

The three sisters eventually walked into the Farmington Hills police station and asked for help. The court arranged for their grandmother to live with them and their mother, who is an alcoholic.

"WE JUST HOPE the grandmother lives long enough so the girls are old enough to go on their own when she dies," said Harris.

One family of nine children had one son who was forced to live in the basement of their Farmington Hills home.

"His big treat for his birthday came when he got to eat at the top of the basement stairs so he could see the rest of the family eating," Harris said. The boy was allowed to read school books and library books but was discouraged from association with the rest of the family.

His brothers and sisters, 8 months to 15 years old, were afraid to speak up or complain lest they become the next targets, according to Harris.

Along with child abuse, many of the incidents are coupled with neglect of the house.

Children and their parents live in homes that are strewn with old, unwashed clothes, garbage, unsorted food and dirty blankets. Stopped-up toilets, sinks, human and animal feces and rats can be found in homes of neglected children in some of the more affluent Farmington Hills subdivisions, according to police.

One home, which has been the subject of complaints over the past several years, had a rat's nest built from old clothes in the parents' bedroom.

LICE AND maggots were in the house.

The family owned a house in an affluent area of town. Both parents were professionals. The mother was active in the Girl Scouts.

When a baby sister tried to clean out the home, the husband pulled back inside the five garbage bags she had discarded.

The court referee suggested that the parents seek counseling. Their child refused to return home and was placed in a foster home.

"You can't take anybody this sick and tell them to straighten themselves out. These people need help," said Harris.

Another home had complaints reaching back to 1950. The last time police came to the house, they were called in by Oakland County animal control workers who thought the family dog was locked in a vacant building. In addition to the dog, they found three feet of dirty laundry in the utility room and a sink so heaped with discards that police had to search for the faucet. They found maggots on the bottom of the sink.

The four children living in the house were sent to school in ill-kept clothing and shunned by classmates. One of the daughters is on the verge of dropping out because of her classmates' teasing.

POLICE INVITED a social worker to visit the home before the hearing, according to Murphy. The social worker refused. The children are still at home.

All of the children that the Farmington Hills Juvenile Bureau comes into contact with remain at home with their parents.

For that reason, the department sees the juvenile court as ineffective at best.

They take the children through juvenile court but try to leave the adults sent to criminal court for action.

When adults face a probate court referee, they are usually asked to enter counseling or are sent to classes in housekeeping or money management, according to police.

Probate court doesn't levy fines or hand out sentences to parents who abuse their children, according to police.

Criminal courts or action by juvenile judges has more teeth in it but seldom do those cases climb that far in the judicial system, police say.

While Murphy and Harris are disparaging of the system which sends the children back, they are full of



praise for the cooperation they receive from the Farmington School District, the Oakland County Health Department and its nurses, the Farmington Hills building department and housing inspectors.

"They're terrific," said Harris. Children are first examined by a doctor to check for physical signs of abuse. They're taken to Children's Village and given an attorney. After a preliminary hearing where evidence is shown, a decision is made about the child's return to the family.

The return is based on the assumption the parents will get help and a caseworker will check on the child.

SOMETIMES, evidence of physical abuse is absent. Instead there is psychological abuse.

A high school honor student throws herself into school activities because once she gets home, her parents forbid her to leave the house.

Another honor student came to police when her father attempted to have her placed in a mental institution because he caught the 15-year-old sneaking out on dates.

"The father lamented that the daughter had been so good for so long he couldn't put her away," Harris remembers.

## Avoid runaway crisis by communication

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Communication is the key to preventing a child from becoming a runaway.

But it demands that both child and parents work to maintain good relations. That requires time and the ability to compromise, according to Farmington Advisory Commission's Client Services Director Jimmy Patton.

The same formula of time and compromise is suggested for families of returned runaways but Patton prefers to use it as a preventative measure before the teens find a life for themselves on the city streets.

Parents who work long hours to maintain their residence in an affluent neighborhood sometimes sacrifice time with their family for their job.

"That tends to isolate the family from the parents. There's no communication. There's no time with the kids."

"The family unit is deteriorating," he said.

Instead of giving their time, some parents substitute money for a sign of caring about their children.

BUT PATTON sees this tendency toward devaluing time as a prime factor in raising a runaway.

"Time is important. Otherwise, you have total isolation. If you don't see someone, you can't communicate," he said.

The quality of the time spent is more important than the amount of time. Really listening to a child for a short period is preferable to spending hours with him without paying attention, according to Patton.

"People have to feel important," he said.

One way they know they're important is when someone pays attention to them.

Without that feeling, a sense of isolation grows in the child and he begins to consider running away.

Runaways have a vague idea of the kind of life they'd live once they're on the streets.

Entertaining the idea the \$25 will keep them for a year in Florida, runaways go off to escape and to find adventure, according to Patton.

But runaways avoid leaving home without having a destination in mind. Usually, they run toward a city or a person.

"They go to where they consider their people to be. That's not necessarily their parents. They generally go to other friends," according to Patton.

THIS WAY, they have solved the problem of finding a place to stay their first night away from home.

If a teen runs without having a destination, then he probably feels cornered by his home situation, according to Patton.

Adventure has some lure for runaways. From the suburbs, they run to the nearest big city, Detroit.

"They think it's the land of opportunity. It's somewhere they haven't been. Some of their parents haven't been there, either," Patton said.

Without friends to turn to, runaways are picked up by adults on the streets or get into trouble and are taken home by the police.

"Most of them adapt quickly," Patton said.

Adaptation means learning to do anything to survive. They begin to find a niche for themselves in the street scene. Some are so successful at surviving on their own they don't return home.

One boy Patton remembers left home at 13 and stayed away for six years. Then, he decided to patch up the relationship with his family. It had become important for him to do.

Some find a substitute family on the street.

"A PIMP is a parent. When you're bad, he beats you up. When you're good, he rewards you. He provides structure," Patton said.

Parents who hand out money instead of discipline are a particular peeve of Patton's. Structure is a desired part of a home life for children.

But returning runaways are sometimes faced with parents who suddenly become too strict or act more lax out of fear the child will leave again.

Returned runaways who are referred to Patton are helped to find a livable middle ground with their families. The main problem is attacked instead of patching up incidents as they crop up.

"We try to isolate the reason they ran away in the first place," explained Patton.

One of the reasons more and more teens are running from home is the changing social values they face, according to Patton.

Teens are faced with different values at home, in school and in their group.

"It's confusing. Growing up now is harder than it's ever been," he said.

"There's not much structure and there's three different sets of rules," he said.

## THE INSIDE \* ANGLE

•ENCOURAGING a bit of summer reading among its members has got to be on the mind of Farmington school board trustees who recently toasted good-by to two of their colleagues, ANN STRUBLE and WILLIAM GRAVIVUS. Struble, who was a talent for storytelling at a recent session, was given a copy of "Outlooks through Literature," a junior high textbook she criticized by retelling three of the stories to the board. Not content to hear only three of the stories, one school board wag has suggested she return every so often to spin a couple of tales for trustees. That's one way to break up a long, dry meeting. Can an organ intermission be far behind?

•ANOTHER KIND OF RECITAL recently took place at Hill Day School. Violin students finished their 1977-78 school year with a recital. The young musicians played on violins scaled down to their size. Jason Blum, Jeremy Pepper, Joshua Cutler, Gabi Fleischer, Jeffrey Wittenberg, Brian Lett and Jonathan Freed were featured in the program. Trevor Hart, Jeremy Share, David Wittenberg, Jeffrey Sudakin, Laurie Phillips, Jonathan Eskin, Jonathan Goldstein, David Weiner, Doreen James, Jeffrey Weiner, Debra Goldstein, Gary Weissman and Jeffrey Lupovitch are featured.

•NEXT TIME that lunchtime picnic crowd looks a little familiar. Think again. It could be the Farmington Hills Detective Bureau combining their lunch hour with some time in the local park. Softball anyone?

•EVERYONE'S heard of Carter's treehouse. Carter's liver pills and Carter's foreign policy. Add to that list Carter's Ink Co., which recently named TOM HEWES salesman of the year for 1977. Hewes is no stranger to the title. He first earned it in 1966. He and his wife Carolyn live in Farmington Hills. For the rest of the year, customers will be able to pick out Hewes fairly easily. He'll be leaving gold engraved salesman of the year business cards. Are they as effective as leaving a silver bullet behind?

•GETTING TO THE heart of the matter, Henry Ford Hospital's West Bloomfield center is offering recertification sessions in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Persons who have a one-year CPR certification card which expires between May and November 1978 can be recertified for three years by attending one three-hour session to successfully demonstrate skills and pass a written test. The sessions are 14 p.m. and 7-10 p.m. each day. To register for one session, call the center at 661-4100. There will be a 25 cent materials charge. The center is at 6777 W. Maple, west of Orchard Lake Road.

•WARREN LYONS of Farmington Hills has been appointed administrative assistant for ambulatory services at Providence Hospital, Southfield. He has worked for two years as an administrative assistant to the executive director of the John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Edison, N.J. He has a master's degree in business administration and public health from Columbia University, and a bachelor of arts degree, magna cum laude, from Fordham University, New York. He served as an administrative resident at Kennedy Medical Center.

•BE KIND to your shady friends, especially if they're poor beleaguered elm trees. To keep them free from Dutch elm disease, mail for a free copy of the Conscientious Injectors Handbook. If you have a healthy tree, and if it's more than 10 feet in circumference, it's probably more than 100 years old. If you get to touch with the Elm Research Institute, Elm Road (what else?) Harrisville, N.H. 03450, they'll arrange to insure that your tree stays healthy.

•SALESMANSHIP can be tiring but GERALD HOWLEY of Farmington Hills kept at it until he was one of 29 B.F. Goodrich Tire Division employees inducted into the company's Winner's Circle Sales Honor Society.

•ONEUPMANSHIP comes early these days. At Fairview Elementary School a student was heard calling principal DON COWAN the "world's greatest principal." Later, he explained to Cowan that he had stretched a few points when he made the statement. Cowan, with a smile, returned the compliment. "I had to stretch a point, too. I said you were the world's greatest students." Inside Angles figures it's the principal of the thing that counts.

•STILL ON THE school scene, Farmington High School is turning out a great welder in JOHN REID. The student won a \$50 third prize in the novice section of Weldorama, a superbowl of welding competition, according to its sponsor, the Chemtron Corp. Angles wants to know if they supplied cheerleaders just like at the other Superbowl. (Give us a W, give us an E. . .)

•HAVE AN ANGLE to something around town? Want to tell someone besides your next door neighbor? Tell Inside Angles by dropping us a line at the Farmington Observer, Box 69, Southfield 48037. You too can become a compleat angler.

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