

Group forms to develop home for handicapped

By DIANE ABRAMS
It is the objective of most parents to insure a secure life for their offspring after they are gone.
However, the parents of the mentally ill often worry about uncertain future their children will one day have to face.
A group of concerned Bloomfield Hills residents have begun to answer some of the questions about what and where the mentally handicapped can be cared for. Called Voice for the Mentally Handicapped, Inc. (VMH), the growing organization is a nonprofit housing corporation of 30 members.
Its objective is to develop a home-like environment for mentally or emotionally handicapped persons who do not require hospitalization, but cannot function in the total community.
"The idea is to create a home-like atmosphere as much as possible. We

want to make the residents as comfortable and happy as they can be to the extent of their abilities," said Lee Nickel, vice-president of the group.
"Why should the mentally ill be deprived of a home?"
It was this belief, coupled with concern for his own mentally handicapped daughter, that motivated George DeLoof, president of VMH, to seek others interested in similar facilities for the mentally handicapped.
"When I came to Lee four years ago, I had already tried other avenues," said DeLoof. "As a parent of a handicapped child, I had concern for my daughter's future after my wife and I were no longer here."
"I found that a lot had been done for the mentally retarded, but little was available for the mentally disturbed."
Each of the homes that the VMH is proposing will accommodate 12 resi-

dents. The bedrooms will be large and attractive, with facilities to sleep two people each.
The outside of the building, like the inside, will be designed to create an atmosphere as close as possible to that of a family home.
"We want to keep the occupancy rate down to 12 residents so that each person is assured of any necessary attention. Twenty-four hour supervision will be provided by live-in house parents," said Nickel.
Although VMH has found the public to be generally receptive to its objectives, implementing its plans is a long and complicated task, often woven with red-tape and disappointments.
When the group asked the state for money three years ago, it was informed of the specific criteria that must be met to set up such facilities.
First, the group must affiliate with a sponsoring organization that would act as an umbrella. The umbrella would guarantee the continuation of the program. After months of searching, Civitan, an international community service organization, agreed to sponsor the group.
The next step will be to select a site for the first home. Once a successful home is established, VMH plans to build more. It hopes that other service groups will eventually copy its idea.

Grand Rapids and Lansing.
"All we know at this point is the site first home will be in Oakland County. We're not sure as to an exact location yet."
"We had been promised specific property in the past, but for one reason or another, things always fell through," said Nickel.
Money will be needed to get started. Once VMH meets state criteria, a low-interest mortgage from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority will be made available to it.
However, this will cover only the cost of the structure and part of the land acquisition. VMH must raise money to supplement the \$300,000 expected from the state. This money will cover the cost of furnishing and maintenance of the various homes.
"We have ideas for fund raising," said DeLoof. "However, we need support and will appeal to foundations and interested companies and corporations for donations."
"Success also depends on the number of concerned individuals willing to work with us and support our efforts."

The cost for house members will be covered by supplemental security income, such as social security and state aid, he said. Admission to a VMH home will be determined by a board comprised of state supporting agencies.
To enter one of the homes, someone must be at least 18, have a mental or emotional handicap at any level of nonviolent illness or retardation, and a good capacity for self care. Housing could be temporary, although residents with chronic illnesses could stay indefinitely, including the remainder of their lifetimes.
"The key word surrounding admittance is compatibility," said Nickel.
"We will be very selective to insure that all house residents can get along with people and will participate in a family-structured lifestyle."
The admittance procedure is the primary area that distinguishes VMH from other organizations of its kind. The group will handle the mentally ill, but also will accept retarded individuals who are trainable and educable.
"It is possible for an individual to be mentally ill from birth and, as a result of not being able to accept training, function as though he is retarded," explained Nickel. "VMH could accept mentally retarded individuals who can be trained to live in a family environment."

Emphasis will be placed on programs designed to keep the residents active and functional. Transportation is being considered for these residents wishing to attend school, jobs or workshops.
Although VMH has come a long way, the group still has many obstacles to overcome before opening its housing facilities.
"We expect problems depending on where we locate," said Nickel. "And how sympathetic residents in the area feel to their fellow man. We want sym-

Arts commission starts year with \$6,000 grant

The Farmington Area Arts Commission has received a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts in the amount of \$6,000 to continue art endeavors in the community.
The money received, along with money allotted to the commission by Farmington and Farmington Hills, contribute to the budget of the joint commission.
Headed by Beverly Ellis, the commission works to coordinate the donated time and labors of all groups in the two communities in art-related efforts.
The commission's calendar for the 1978-79 year will carry five concerts at Oakland Community College. Art Exposure in the Schools goes into another season.
The band concert, programmed for seniors and the handicapped, is set

this year for March, and the artist-in-residence program in late spring.
The Children's Art-In, given in conjunction with Farmington Festival for the second year this past summer, is now a standard part of the year's programming. And the commission will continue to support the Farmington Artists Club exhibits in the fall and spring.
A GRANT from the Michigan Foundation for the Arts, an affiliate of the Michigan Council for the Arts, spotlights the work of John Glick. The Farmington resident who is known nation wide for his pottery took a seat on the arts commission last year.
He has been chosen as the subject of a film that will show the artist at work in his studio. The film will be shown on Channel 56; then distributed throughout the state.

THE STATE, which can supply money, will require that the homes be built around the state. Already suggested are potential sites in Marquette, Grand Rapids and Lansing.
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