

# They enter open door to better lives

by CAROL MAHONEY

If your problem is alcohol, drugs, marital strife, depression, or parenting, Threshold is an agency ready to help.

Anne Chomet, director of Threshold, believes it offers many advantages other agencies do not.

"The beauty of our agency is that we have very little red tape," she said.



Anne Chomet, director of Threshold, believes that because there is very little red tape, most people never feel like a number. She is seeking an agency to take an interest in the program and help raise funds.

"People don't feel like a number. They can walk in and someone will talk to them."

She explained that the Threshold staff of counselors strives to help troubled families, married couples, or single persons examine their situations and take steps to improve them.

Ms. Chomet said that a large part of the agency's caseload comes from court or school referrals.



Rosalie Schwartz performs double duty as both counselor and public relations director. Her files contain dozens of letters from families thanking Threshold for its aid during periods of extreme stress.

"There is a sliding fee scale based on your income," said Ms. Chomet. Many clients receive services free of charge because their income is so low.

Located in a 100-year-old farmhouse in Hazel Park, Threshold is supported by funds from the city of Hazel Park and the Oakland County Office for Substance Abuse.

Although Threshold services are open to residents of the tri-county area, Ms. Chomet said that 95 per cent of the cases come from Oakland County and 54 per cent from the city of Hazel Park.

According to Ms. Chomet, funding currently poses a problem. Last June the Hazel Park City Council voted to cut its contribution to Threshold by half. Cuts are also expected from the county.

"We need an organization to take an interest in us and help raise funds," she said.

**THE PAID STAFF** at Threshold consists of four women and three men with degrees in sociology or therapy. In addition, selected graduate students from the Wayne State School of Social Work are assigned a caseload under staff supervision. Working in the field is part of the requirement for a master's degree, Ms. Chomet explained.

Describing services offered by Threshold, Rosalie Schwartz, who does both public relations and counseling, compared the agency's work to that of a mother. "What does a mother do?" she asked. "So many different things when a problem presents itself."

Threshold will also work with an entire family. Ms. Chomet cited a situation where both the mother and a

father had drinking problems.

The staff, at Threshold suggested individual therapy for the mother and group therapy for the family members. The father refused to participate.

Ms. Chomet explained that the mother in this case felt "incompetent and dumb." Therapy helped to build up her feelings of self-esteem, and taught her how to communicate with her family.

She eventually divorced the abusive spouse, got a job, and is maintaining a home for her children. One of the children, who had run away, now is involved in school activities and earns good grades.

The success story has been repeated often, Mrs. Chomet noted. Letters from clients frequently give evidence to the agency's influence on the community.

One couple, whose son's dependence on drugs lasted over nine years, wrote, "Through the gentle interest and personal prompting of Threshold's counselor, our son was accepted at a fine therapeutic farm for treatment. He has a whole new concept of himself at this point and is working hard to rid himself of his problem. . . . We have been associated with 19 various agencies in seeking help and can only say, 'Thank God for Threshold.'"

The letter also revealed that the counselor had urged the parents to

Photos by Dick Kelley

seek treatment for themselves, because the duration of their son's drug problem had completely drained them.

**A RECENT WIDOW** also offered her thanks in a letter to Threshold. She wrote, "For more than a year, my Threshold counselor was at my side helping me through my husband's long illness. Through her help I was able to deal with the other areas of my life which were affected by the illness and eventual death."

"Through counseling I was able to accept the death and also assist my children with their grief."

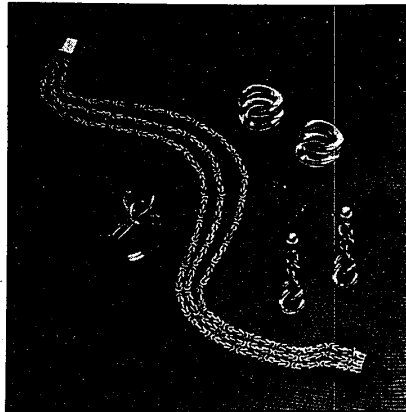
Aside from individual counseling, Threshold also has groups which meet regularly. Two of them focus on the problem of alcohol abuse. They are the Alcohol Education and the Alcohol

Recovery groups. Ms. Chomet pointed out, that since 90 per cent of the cases received at Threshold involve alcohol abuse, these groups are vitally needed.

The Alcohol Education Group, she pointed out, is made up primarily of offenders sent by the courts. "This is an entry point for these people. It is a 10-week series which keeps repeating."

**AT THRESHOLD**, participants are taught the psychological effects of alcohol abuse, and what it does to family relationships. They discuss the causes of excessive drinking and are shown films about alcohol.

"Its purpose is to get people comfortable in a group and to help them stop denying that they have a problem," Ms. Chomet said.



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