

No magic answers

Journalist tells tale of alcoholism

By JACKIE KLEIN

"In 1979, the international year of the child, kids are caught in a wobbly, off-kilter, frightening world which condones alcohol and tolerates kooks."

The speaker is Bob Talbert, a Detroit Free Press columnist who was in Southfield last Wednesday to tell a group of about 60 parents how to talk to their children about alcohol.

The forum was sponsored by Southfield Parent-Youth Guidance Commission, Southfield Public Schools, Southfield Youth Services Department and Oakland County Office of Substance Abuse.

"I don't have any magic answers," Talbert said. "But I suggest you give your kids firm roots and free wings by listening to what they have to say in reasoning moments. You gain insight when you listen to your children as individuals, not possessions."

Talbert, who admitted he was a "teenage drunk," started drinking when he was 14. He said his addiction lasted 10 years and he's been dry for 16. His columns about the treatment of alcoholics and how he kicked the habit bring a deluge of mail and phone calls from relatives of problem drinkers, he said.

"Parenting worries us because nobody told us what to expect or gave a course in it," said Talbert who has two children, age 19 and 12.

THE COLUMNIST offered 12 tips on how to bridge the communication gap. He suggested parents invite confidences from their children but shouldn't insist on them.

"Avoid comparisons between your kids and others," Talbert advised. "If you throw others up to them and talk about role models, that's an immediate turnoff. You can set examples for your children which you expect other parents to set for theirs."

"See your kids as others see them and be honest about it. Try to improve your methods of communication, plug in to where your children are coming from and don't be a buddy to them, be a parent. Be consistent in your relationship and use discipline as correction, not punishment. Be merciful, just and firm and stick to it."

"Help your kids understand limits. Young drinkers don't carry plastic credit cards, have their homes reas-

Talbert suggested parents encourage children to develop their own egos and individual personalities for self confidence. Mothers and fathers should give their kids reasons they can understand and listen when they give their side.

"MY KIDS knew I was an alcoholic and had a nervous breakdown," Talbert said. "But they also know I made a success of my life instead of ending up in the gutter. I quit drinking at the end of a gun and almost committed suicide twice. I had to accept a sober me."

"When I was a teenager, I wanted to be the biggest drunk on the block. I was a competitive drinker. Part of me was searching for manhood. I was afraid to find the me I was looking for. But my ego said I lost everything I took a drink. I figured I was worth saving. Now I won't even drink apple juice which has been on the shelf for six months. I was allergic to alcohol and my liver and

bladder went through hell for 10 years."

Talbert maintained young persons who set limits and drink in moderation won't become problem drunks. Youths drink for attention, not necessarily for escape, he contended.

"Kids need constant support," he claimed. "They'll experiment with liquor with or without you and it's better they do it at home. Spend time with your children and find out what their peers are doing. Their peers may be your enemies."

"If you want to gain their confidence, admit something horrible about yourself. Kids understand weaknesses and frailties. Treat them as human beings with rights. Don't put pressures on them they can't live up to. Let your children know you're not a superhero and that you've screwed up too."

L. Bolyards mark 59th

Leslie and Ross Bolyard, who lived at 19985 Hubbard for more than 40 years, celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary quietly in their new home in Hudson, Fla.

When the couple raised their family on Hubbard, Livonia was a township and their mail came through the Farm-

ington post office. Farmington was the nearest business district. The Farmington Enterprise was their hometown paper. They considered Farmington their home.

The couple were married on Feb. 24, 1920. Their retirement home is at 101 Sommers, Hudson, Fla. 33568.

Library warms up winter

Program registration at the Farmington Community Library will continue through the first two weeks of March. Both branches will offer a wide variety of programs for children of all ages. From 9-11 a.m., registration must be made in person at either branch library. After 11 a.m. phone registrations will be accepted.

Preschoolers may register for "Big Bird's Bash" plus one five week program: "Science for Tots," "A Tisket, a Tasket, a Storyteller's Basket," "Music for Young Moderns" at the Farmington branch on Liberty. Also at the Farmington branch will be Writers in Training (WIT) for first and second graders, "Monster Mash" for third and fourth graders, "Green Thumb Fun" and "Bulletin Boards." Each meets twice. Those classes are for fifth and sixth graders.

At the Farmington Hills branch on Twelve Mile, preschoolers may register for "Big Bird's Bash," in addition to a regular five week program: "A Tisket, a Tasket, a Storyteller's Basket,"

"Start with Art," "Science for Tots" or "The Beat Goes On with Music." First and second graders can join "Stone Soup" while WIT will be presented for third and fourth graders. A special program, conducted for one session for fifth and sixth graders is "Me-Share T-Shirts." Also, "Readers Roundtable" is offered for fifth and sixth graders.

As with all registration required programs at the Farmington Community, Farmington and Farmington Hills residents are given first preference. Children should not sign up for the same programs they attended in January through February. If a class wants to sign up for a second program or if he's from outside Farmington, his name will be placed on a waiting list.

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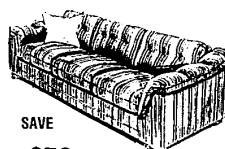


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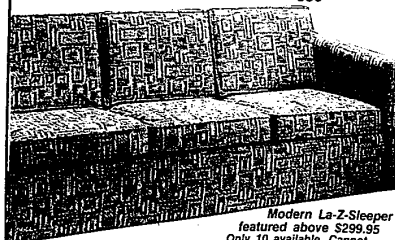


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