

# Friend of court often unknown

By MARY KLEMIC

Michigan residents have a "friend indeed" who has been around for 60 years but is unknown to many.

This friend is not a person but a legal system meant to enforce child support after a divorce judgment. The "friend of the court" investigates all divorce, paternity and family support cases involving minor children.

After its investigation, the friend of the court submits recommendations to the court about child custody, visitation and amounts of child support and alimony.

Toni Kennedy, executive editor at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, explained the system at a recent meeting of the Northwest Wayne County chapter of the National Organization for Women.

"The friend of the court has potential," she told 20 women. "It can do some great work, but also can create some big problems."

"People have to be informed (about this) because we all have to be involved in policy decisions that are made."

She said the system is useful, but should be reorganized because "it's pretty much a bureaucratic mess."

The friend of the court can be useful even if the parties involved don't have a major disagreement, Ms. Kennedy said.

"It is not necessarily a waste of time when there appears to be an agreement," she said. "One party may be pressured by all kinds of situations. Someone looking over the agreement insures that it just isn't passed over."

She said that areas in the system needing reorganization include its review function and the way in which its specific policies and procedures are determined.

The friend of the court is required by law to review any child support orders every two years if the child is on welfare, when ever it has information about new conditions that may justify modification, or on request from the custodial parent, but not more than every two years.

"You should be able to walk in and say, 'I want a review,'" Ms. Kennedy said, "but they don't do this (as if it were) welcome." She said after the meeting that often parents are told instead to find an attorney or that they are on a waiting list. She said that this happens because the staff is too small.

The circuit judges, who appoint one person as friend of the court in that district, determine the policies and procedures it will follow. These are different in each county.

"There is disagreement among counties about what the statutes tell them to do," Ms. Kennedy said. "No one can interpret the statutes."

The real question of reorganization is how it can be paid for, she said.

"Any kind of reorganization has always got to deal with this question: Where is the money coming from?" she said.

Michigan had the best record in the country for collecting court ordered child support cases in 1974, when 65 percent of all such cases were collected.

"But 65 percent is not really very good," she said. She said that Genesee county collected 82 percent of cases that year, when it happened to have high unemployment.

The Michigan friend of the court system, established in 1919, is the only one in the United States. Other states use a family court system or specialized courts that deal with domestic matters. These are not very successful, Ms. Kennedy said, because they tend to be courts of lesser stature.

# Who's afraid of fund-raisers?

By LINDA FARHAT

Is your group in need of a fund-raiser? Is it short on cash and also on ideas? Well, Livonian Mary Pulick has been handing out free advice for years and is prepared to share some useful hints with you and your organization.

Mrs. Pulick is a volunteer treasurer for the Livonia Historical Commission.

She makes fundraising simple, if you follow a few basic steps.

• Have a purpose for the fund-raiser.

This is one of the first mistakes many groups make.

"Rather than just raising money, explain what it will be used for," Mrs. Pulick said. "When I told the Girl Scouts that the money they were raising was for camp, their enthusiasm increased."

• Set a goal.

"Make the goal realistic, and establish how much money is needed for the purpose," she said.

Make the goal reachable, so the members won't get discouraged.

• Start publicity right away.

Publicity should be started as soon as the fund-raiser is decided upon.

"This is one of the areas that is not given enough thought," she said. "This step should be given to a responsible member who will be thorough."

Get the press releases and the posters out way ahead of the fund-raiser — don't wait until the last minute. There is no such thing as being too early.



Mary Pulick

ly, Mrs. Pulick said.

• Make the fund-raiser different and timely.

Workshops are one way of being timely. Set them during holidays such as Christmas, Mothers' Day and Easter.

"All you have to do is supply the material and the teacher," Mrs. Pulick suggested, "and when they come out, they (participants) feel like they have accomplished something."

• Don't wait for volunteers, assign people to jobs.

"In any organization, there are usually people who do everything or nothing," she said. "Avoid this pitfall. Assign people jobs, if you pass around the sign-up sheet, chances are that it will come back unsigned."

• Don't goof off on the last day.

"Having people oversee details during the actual day of the fund-raiser," Mrs. Pulick said, "is just as important

as being prepared before the actual day of the fund-raiser."

• During the event, make sure all angles are covered.

"There should be plenty of space so your customers won't feel out of place or uncomfortable," she said, adding that if organization is thought out and sorted out, "everything should run smoothly."

After the fund-raiser is over evaluations should be made by group members on how well they thought the project worked out. Money spent and earned should also be recorded.

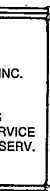
"When dealing with school functions," Mrs. Pulick said, "there should always be a follow up report to inform people what the money went towards in school."

All records should be kept in the presidential file in case the group wants to look back and see if the fund-raiser is worth repeating.



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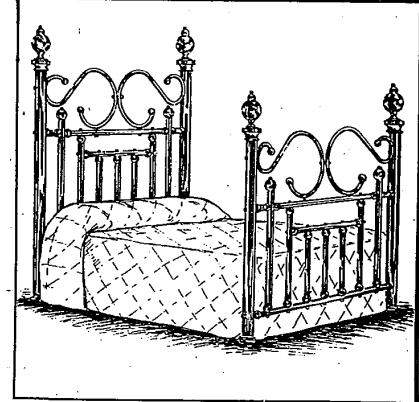
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