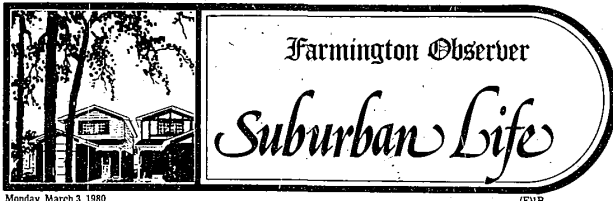


Children: the Challenge

Giving 'the best gift we can give to our children'

'We are not telling anyone how to raise their children. What we're doing, is sharing techniques of handling problems that have worked for us.'

— Judy Marks



By LORRAINE MCCLISH

Ellen Yashinsky describes the philosophy of Rudolf Dreikurs, as spelled out in his book, "Children: The Challenge," as "the best gift we can give to our children."

Mrs. Yashinsky is currently taking registrations for the next group of discussion classes based on the book.

"Dreikurs helps us view our child and our role in his life so the child learns how to make his own decisions and to be a responsible and self-confident person."

She, along with 13 others who are enrolled in previous classes are now acting as volunteer group leaders or co-leaders, "to keep spreading the word."

The Dreikurs approach to child rearing has now spread to at least 240 families in Farmington and Farmington Hills since it was introduced here two years ago by Gary and Barbara Galens through the Family Education Committee of Farmington Youth Assistance (FYA).

Most of it has spread through word of mouth, "as one mother sees what another is accomplishing that she isn't," Mrs. Galens said.

Overall the group discussions teach techniques that will motivate the child to function cooperatively, to respect himself and others and take responsibility for his own actions.

FOUR SESSIONS set to being the week of March 10 offer options of day-time or evening classes and choice of location. A maximum of 16 persons to each discussion group provide maximum participation from each group member.

Homework is assigned having to do with a particular subject from a text in the book. Then discussion is pursued with questions, problems, successes and failures, common to all parents.

"Some of us have had more serious problems than others, but we are not addressing ourselves to anything other than the day-to-day things all of us experience," Mrs. Yashinsky said.

"I wasn't having any problems when I joined the class," said Judy Marks. "I

was trying to sort through a flood of conflicting theories (on child rearing). The outcome was that I was enriched in not only learning about my own role as mother, but in all my relationships with other people."

Lois Powers, who had read the book before joining the discussion class, said, "The book alone didn't do it for me. I needed the support of that group."

Madelyn Ryan advocates parents take the class when their children are very young, or even during a first pregnancy.

"Learning the techniques is not a lot of work, as I suspected. They become a way of life," she said. "It gets easier all the time because it becomes second nature to you. It's part of you."

ALL OF THE women agreed that the Dreikurs theory might meet, and indeed has met, with resistance by some parents, in one or another facet of child-rearing, and they as individuals, were not exceptions.

Mrs. Powers gave the example of a child who had forgotten to take his lunch to school.

The lunch was prepared by the mother, who had fulfilled her part of a pre-arranged plan as to how the child was to eat lunch.

"Before we joined the class, instead of allowing the child to go without lunch, we would have run to school to get it there before noon," Mrs. Powers said.

"The child has learned absolutely nothing except maybe that his mother is responsible for not only making his lunch but getting it to school. The result is one irresponsible child; one who knows that if he forgets anything someone else will remember for him," she said.

"Our perfect-mother oriented society balks at that kind of thinking, at first."

In response to Mrs. Powers' example, as if in one voice, four women said, "This is a very difficult thing to do."

But Mrs. Marks added, "Life is so much easier now."

And from Mrs. Powers, "The screaming and the yelling has stopped."



Mothers who have all been participants in previous sessions of "Children: The Challenge" take on the roles of group leaders or co-leaders for the next series of study groups, set to begin the week of March 10. Sharing what they've learned this time around are Ellen Yashinsky (from left), Lois Powers, Judy Marks, Barbara Galens and Madelyn Ryan. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

RESPECT FOR the child and encouragement to him are paramount in the Dreikurs philosophy. So is allowing the child to fail because he has made a bad decision. So is allowing the child the opportunity to settle his own hassles without interference from the parents.

Mrs. Ryan, mother of a 21 month old son, says, "It works right from the beginning."

The most pertinent of the techniques for Mrs. Powers "was understanding why kids act in some of the negative ways they do."

This extended, she said, "to understanding why the in-laws or the neighbors act in some of the negative ways that they do."

"We are not teachers," Mrs. Marks said. "We are not telling anyone how to raise their children. What we're doing is sharing techniques of handling problems that have worked for us."

Mrs. Galens added, "This is much more than getting through the day with disciplining problems. We're preparing the child to face his own world in 20 years."

Mrs. Yashinsky pretty well summed it up by saying, "We're not relying on chance that our children will become productive members of society."

REGISTRATION is limited to parents who live in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

New group discussion sessions are scheduled for Monday afternoons in First Presbyterian Church, 26165 Farmington Road, and Monday evenings in North Farmington High School.

On Tuesday evenings, one session will be held in Farmington High School and one in Harrison High School.

Classes run for ten sessions but will be interrupted for the Easter break.

Cost is \$12 for one parent or two parents of the same family. This cost includes the book, "Children: The Challenge," and all supplemental readings that are necessary for the assigned homework.

Mrs. Yashinsky will take registrations by calling her at 661-0343.



Sweet tips to be shared

Farmington Community Center's Fabulous Fridays series continues with "The Art of Cake Decorating" at 12:30 p.m. March 7. Sandy Rossin (above) and her sister Nancy Wise share their know-how of the art of figure piping, the basic cake decorating technique, and give some sweet tips on candy making. For Mrs. Rossin the art is a hobby. For Mrs. Wise it is a profession. Fee of \$5 includes tasting of the delicacies with coffee and printed recipes and instructions. Registration is necessary by calling the center, 477-8404. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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