

Thursday, September 24, 1981

League of Women Voters

Helen Milliken is optimistic about passage of ERA

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Helen Milliken, who has been involved in a variety of campaigns and causes, is devoting full time to promoting women's rights, she said at the season's first meeting of the West Bloomfield-Farmington League of Women Voters.

Mrs. Milliken said she is emphasizing passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, which has to be ratified by June 1982.

"We've got to be optimistic about this," Michigan's First Lady told the sold-out house.

"Nobody thought we had a chance of getting an extension to enable us to adopt the amendment because Congress had never given such an extension before," she said.

"It was an uphill battle then, and I expect it will be an uphill battle again before this becomes a reality."

"So it must be high on our list of priorities and I speak to impart a sense of urgency," she said.

Under the law, if the required number of states do not ratify the ERA by June 1982, it cannot be approved as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This is a deadline which was extended by Congress before, but political observers do not think the deadline will be extended again.

MRS. MILLIKEN'S is optimistic partly because of increasing donations to ERAmerica, a coalition of 200 national groups working to effect the ERA nationally, and partly because of

a rapidly expanding membership in NOW (National Organization for Women).

"But early on we were caught off guard by a swing to conservatism," she said.

"We were out-flanked and out-financed by a strong minority who are working with passionate intensity to diffuse the issues."

The speaker drew laughs from her audience when she questioned if "God has really told the New Right what to do about everything from Salt II to the Panama Canal" and whether there are "divine mandates that are handed down exclusively to Rev. (Jerry) Farwell."

But it was not in a humorous vein that she said, "It is the way the New Right attacks all who do not stand with them; the way they use to enhance our fear of change."

She continued, "Women today are the spiritual inheritors of the pioneer women who gave birth to this nation. What we have to lose is the right to share in what we've all built."

BEFORE ERA can be adopted, three more states must ratify the amendment within the next nine months. ERAmerica has targeted North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Oklahoma and Missouri for money to be spent and work to be done, believing these states to be the most likely to ratify.

"If it doesn't happen now you can forget about your rights in this century," Mrs. Milliken said. "We've come too far to turn back now and backward is the only other direction."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

"If it doesn't happen now, you can forget about your rights in this century. We've come too far to turn back now, and backward is the only other direction." — Helen Milliken

She cautioned her audience several times to focus only on the ERA in the work the League of Women Voters is doing in behalf of women's issues.

"Don't get ERA diffused with the proposed Family Life Act or abortion issues," she said.

"The New Right tries living these issues together and they are no way connected. Don't pass on your fight to another generation by not sticking to the main issue at hand."

Other generation by not sticking to the main issue at hand.

"First establish a principle of equality (with ERA) and that will make it much easier for us to pursue other gains."

When her talk turned to the subject of raising money, she said, "Wear last year's dress-for-success suit this year so you'll have a success to dress up for."

THE LEAGUE of Women's Voters is one of the 200 groups actively participating in ERAmerica and was one of the first groups to promote the issue after its introduction.

Purpose of the 60 year old organization is to promote political responsibility through the informed and active participation of citizens in government. Mrs. Milliken is a member of LWV

and helped organize the Grand Traverse league.

She is active in Michigan ERAmerica and has served as the national co-chairperson for the coalition since 1978.

She was instrumental in founding Michigan Council for the Arts and has promoted environmental causes, along with programs aimed at the preservation of Michigan's natural beauty.

They're learning to live with patched-up hearts

Toni Stevens was ready to give up when she had to have a heart bypass operation nearly a year ago. But now she's taken on new optimism and is ready to help others in the same depressing state of help.

The change is because of an organization known as Mended Hearts, Inc. It's members are people who have had heart surgery and others interested in their objectives.

They offer encouragement and support to those faced with such surgery and those who have recently had it.

"Mended Hearts has really helped me," said Mrs. Stevens, who had her surgery last October. "I felt my life was over. But my first meeting of Mended Hearts, where I saw other people looking so healthy, really pulled me out of my depression. It helped me so much that I want to help others."

Toni Stevens now is hospital chairwoman for the national organization. Her reaction to its work fits right in with the motto of the national organization: "It's great to be alive and to help others."

MENDED HEARTS' arpa chapter 89 meets monthly in St. Paul Monastery, 23333 Schoolcraft, just east of Telegraph in Detroit.

That is the home base for its president, Brother Pat Keeney, and it will be the setting for the next meeting, scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 27.

At that meeting, Thomas Laird, a medical social worker on the staff of Harper Hospital, will talk about family counseling and coping with cardiac illness, and a potluck supper will follow the discussion.

The non-profit, national service organization was founded 20 years ago, and Brother Keeney, who had a triple-bypass operation in 1971 organized the local chapter.

He said the Mended hearts want to provide aid comfort and encouragement for people anticipating or recovering from heart surgery, and they want to do it by visiting heart patients in the hospital and at home.

But there are problems with giving this support, he noted, because there has to be approval from heart surgeons

and area hospitals, and only Ford Hospital in this area has agreed to such visits.

Beaumont, Sinai and Harper so far have not granted permission, he added.

In addition, reported Brother Keeney, "we have not had a good reaction from the doctors."

"They are not taking the initiative to get us into the hospitals. Some don't want anyone else talking to their patients."

BUT FRANK BILINSKI of Detroit, now a member of the Mended Hearts, said he wished he had been visited by Mended Hearts when he had his first heart operation 19 years ago.

"Once you get out of the hospital you think of a lot of questions you don't want to ask your doctor," he said.

Mrs. Stevens agreed. "Doctors don't give you that much help," she noted.

"At Mended Hearts you find out other people have the same pains you do."

And Brother Keeney pointed out that most heart patients' emotional problems start a couple of months after surgery. That's when it's helpful to attend the monthly meetings, he said.

Mended Hearts sponsors a structured training course to teach members the appropriate do's and don'ts of visiting heart patients. One of the techniques volunteers use is visiting in pairs. They find that talking to the spouse or family of the patient is often as important as talking to the patient.



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Brother Pat Keeney (left), Toni Stevens and Frank Bilinski are grateful for the information and encouragement they find in the Mended Hearts organization.

MACLD chapters gather for state conference

The Michigan Association of Children with Learning Disabilities (MACLD) announces its fall conference Monday, Oct. 5, in Kelllogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

Registration is open to non-members as well as members of all MACLD chapters.

The daylong conference will feature workshop leaders and keynote speakers who will address themselves to a broad spectrum of concerns for the learning disabled person.

Martin Kravitz, director of Educational Programs and founder of the Toronto Learning Center, will deliver the opening keynote address. "Learning Disability — A Changing Perspective."

Dr. James R. Galloway, executive director of National Association of State Directors of Special Education Inc. with extensive experience in industrial training programs, will speak at lunch about where special education is going in the '80s.

Polly Behrmann, author and recipient of many awards, is a special education consultant. Her dinner address, "Accentuate the Positive," will be geared to an audience of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and paraprofessionals and will deal with positives in learning disabilities for all ages.

LEARNING disabled persons have average and above average IQ's but have specific problems with learning. By definition, a learning disability is an "imperfect ability to use language, spoken or written, or to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do math."

The term includes such conditions as perceptual dysfunctions, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and hyperkinesia.

It does not include, however, learning problems which are the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of emotional disturbance, or mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Persons with a learning disability condition can and do function in areas in which they are not disabled. They are creative, logical and rational. They may not learn all things in traditional ways.

For example, they may be able to read, but not add. They may be able to speak fluently, yet not write so. As these confusing abilities can exist in one person, the learning disabled child in school can be incorrectly labelled "lazy," "retarded," or "rebellious."

Many learning disabled persons do achieve success. Thomas Edison, Nelson Rockefeller, Lucie Barnes Johnson, to name a few.

THE MACLD is a state chapter of the National Association of Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD). This national organization addresses itself to promote awareness of the learning disabled condition in education and society-at-large.

Resources in methods and techniques of helping the disabled form a large portion of the purposes of the organization. Karey Rozelle, Julie Andrews and Frank Gifford have spoken out on behalf of this cause.

For registration call the MACLD State office, 2077 Randall, Farmington, 471-0780.



Hill and Dale wraps up 'A Christmas Package'

Tickets for Hill and Dale Garden Club's preholiday fund-raiser called "A Christmas Package" are now on sale.

The event is a package of shopping and browsing through the boutiques of handcrafted gift items and luncheon in Glen Oaks Golf Club, followed by a show of fashions from Claire Kelly of Northville.

The boutiques are open from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3, for no charge. Tickets for the luncheon and show are \$12 each, and must be purchased in advance from Mary Ellen Robinson, 476-8684.

"All of our fund-raising projects are for the sole support of our garden-therapy program," said Eileen Woods, speaking for the 100-member club.

"We are now giving classes to almost 300 special education children in Farmington Public Schools." These students, with varying disabilities, range in age from 5-25. Recipients of the garden-therapy classes, taught by members of the club, include those with orthopedic or multiple handicaps, the learning disabled, hard of hearing or deaf, emotionally impaired, blind or mentally retarded.

The money raised through the fund-raiser will provide another round of programs that include planning, growing, studying and arranging of natural materials.

Emphasis is placed on encouraging a better understanding of nature, wild life and horticulture.

"ALL OF OUR club members contribute their time and effort to this work," Ms. Woods said.

"They collect materials and twice each month assemble kits to be used by each student."

Hill and Dale, now in its 20th year, has received local as well as national recognition for the work it does in garden therapy.

Katie Wernys is president of Hill and Dale this season, and Jean Leich and Pat Camp are co-chairwomen of "A Christmas Package."

Workshops that have run through the summer for the creation of hundreds of both decorative and practical items to stock the boutiques are under the direction of Elaine Gunderson, June Pheill, Gretchen Pugsley and Marge Sundberg.

Hostess chairman for the day is Sherri Gasser.