

# Childless get new hope

By Sherry Kahan  
staff writer

Bonnie has learned she can't bear a child. Denise Grzesniak has one child, but now has learned there can be no more pregnancies. Kathy has a husband who cannot father a child and isn't interested in adopting one.

For all there is the sharp pain of infertility. And for all there is an organization that has been of some help.

It's known as Resolve, and it meets in Ann Arbor.

Resolve is part of a national organization of 40 affiliated chapters and 4,500 members. It seeks to provide information to couples with infertility, as well as give them support. People come from all over southeastern Michigan to the Ann Arbor meetings.

"NOT BEING ABLE to have a child is always in the back of my mind," said Bonnie. "I feel one of the most important things in life was taken from my hands, and there is not much I can do about it."

Adoption, she has learned, is no longer the easy solution it used to be for infertile couples who want children.

"It's harder to adopt now," she explained. "Agencies say their waiting list is closed. Some families are closing international adoptions."

The tone of her voice changed. "You have to try to accept the carnis you're dealt," she said with a sigh. "There is always a slight possibility that something might change for me. But time is ticking away. That is a scary feeling."

One of the values to her of Resolve has been the information she has obtained about infertility. Another has been the chance to share feelings and "find out you're not the only one going through this."

She wishes she had become involved sooner. "I'd encourage anyone going through an infertility medical work-up to give it a try," she suggested. "When you start a work-up, you feel you don't need support. Everything is going to be fine. But then you reach a point when it is good to be with others in the same boat."

GRZESNIAK is faced with questions like "You're not going to have a sibling for your child?" And Kathy, who would

like to talk with her husband about her feelings on being childless, has attended three meetings of the group and plans to go to more.

"I'm amazed at the number of men who are there," she said. "They stay to the end and don't fidget."

Dr. Edwin Peterson, a specialist in endocrinology with offices in Ypsilanti, said Resolve "lends emotional support to couples."

"There is a tremendous emotional component in all this. It is a threat to some men to learn they are not totally fertile. It can put a tremendous strain on a marriage emotionally and sexual-ly."

Resolve was founded nine years ago by an infertile Boston woman named Barbara Eck Menning, author of a book called "Infertility: A Guide for the Childless Couple." She describes infertility as the inability to conceive after a year or more of effort, or the inability to carry a pregnancy to a live birth.

Dr. Peterson pointed out that "infertility is very common problem today and becoming more of a problem as adoption becomes more difficult."

He is a specialist in gynecology and obstetrics, as well as reproductive endocrinology. The endocrine organs secrete hormones that regulate the menstrual and reproductive cycle.

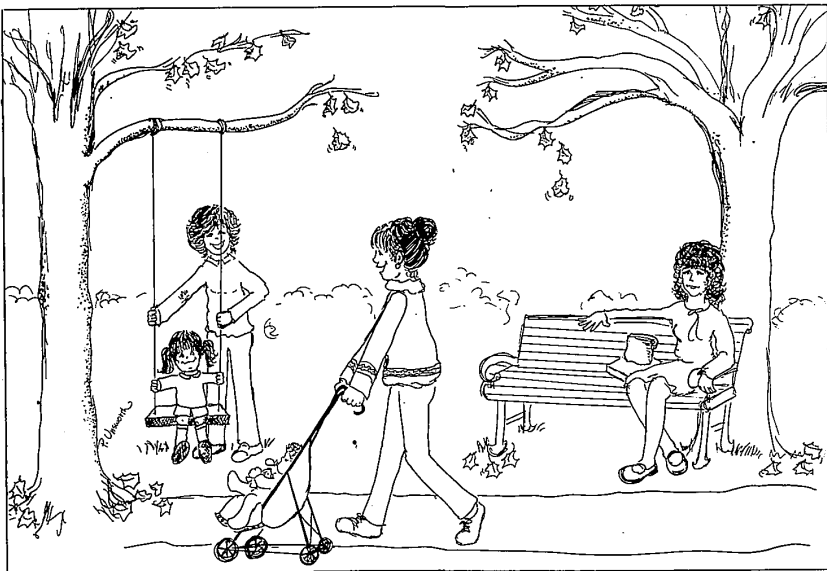
"We can find causes of infertility in about 85 percent of couples," he commented. "The causes in women are the failure to ovulate and tubal damage through secondary infection or the tying of the fallopian tubes."

"We can't always treat infertility successfully. But there have been tremendous advances in treatment. New drugs can increase sperm count. Some men have varicose veins in the scrotum that can be corrected surgically. Women who don't ovulate can be treated with fertility pills or drugs."

Peterson also mentioned that there has been progress in microsurgery to repair fallopian tubes that have been tied.

"I do about one operation a week to reverse this," he said. "I think over the past 10 years women had their tubes tied without appropriate counseling. Their situation changes. They get a divorce, remarry and decide they want children. Under ideal circumstances we have a success rate of 70 percent."

WHILE PETERSON believes that



Resolve is useful in providing a vent for anguish feeling regarding infertility, he dismissed the idea that emotional factors cause infertility.

The decline in the sperm count of the average male is definitely a cause, he said. In fact, about 40 percent of infertility is caused by males. Low sperm count is suspected to be the result of environmental factors such as a toxic chemical, noted Peterson. But it is not certain which chemicals are involved.

It was his opinion that while the birth control pill has some serious side effects, "causing infertility is not one of them."

Peterson, who practices at 3075 Clark in Ypsilanti, pointed out that there are about 120 doctors nationally who are certified as reproductive endocrinologists by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Two, in addition to himself, work in this area. They are Dr. S.J. Behrman, a former associate of Peterson, who practices at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, and Dr. Kamran S. Moghisi, who is associated with C.S. Mott Center, 275 E. Hancock, Detroit.

KATHY IS trying to adapt to her situation.

"Women are not half as threatened by this as men," she explained. "You have to respect someone's opinion. He (Kathy's husband) is just as happy without children. I would adopt in a minute. But he said if we can't have our own, we can't have any. I had a hard time over that. It's a very stressful thing in a marriage."

"I think many women have a biological urge to have at least one child. It was painful to learn I couldn't. Horrible. Because I was raised to believe that was the only way to live. When I first found out about it, I went through years of hoping, but nothing came."

"In all that time, no one ever sat down with me and said, 'You're OK. Life without children is not that bad.' There is no counseling when you go through a fertility work-up. That's terrible. I think couples need to know what's happening."

Kathy believes she is beginning to come to terms with being childless. "I feel sorry for the ones who fight it," she said. "A lot of them feel they

**'We can't always treat infertility successfully. But there have been tremendous advances in treatment.'**

—Dr. Edwin Peterson  
endocrinologist

are going to die if they don't have a natural child. You can hear that in their voices. It's so sad."

FOR A WHILE, Grzesniak took it when people commented about her not having a second child, just as other infertile women have put up with well-meaning promises based on unreliable folk wisdom. "Adopt a baby, you'll have another," is a favorite. "You and your husband should take a vacation," is another.

Now she can point out facts such as "the incidence of pregnancy after adoption is about 5 percent. Infertile couples who don't adopt get pregnant at the same rate."

She added: "I used to be polite when I heard all the comments. But now I make them personally accountable for what they say. It is mostly due to thoughtlessness. It never occurs to people that an individual might have a problem, and that their comments are hurtful rather than helpful."

"I think the infertiles have to come out from the closet and explain their difficulty."

The group plan an all-day conference that the organization plans Nov. 6 in Weber's Inn, Ann Arbor.

Those interested in attending should call Grzesniak, co-president of Ann Arbor Area Resolve, at 769-2093.

## Infertility is on increase

In her book "Infertility: A Guide for the Childless Couple," Barbara Eck Menning debunks myths, discusses ways to prevent infertility and gives advice on how to pick a good doctor. Between two, soft-blue covers she presents 173 pages of facts that might take months to find elsewhere.

Here are a few of the points she makes:

- About 15 percent of those of childbearing age in the U.S. are infertile at any given time. This amounts to one in every six couples of child bearing age, or more than 10 million people.

- Infertility is on the increase. One factor in this rise is believed to be delaying childbearing into the years after 30. A woman is maximally fertile in her mid 20s. The rise in venereal disease is also involved. Some birth control methods are under scrutiny.

- Fertility clinics are seeing an increasing number of women who have ceased ovulating after use of the birth control pill," wrote Menning. "The intrauterine device has also been implicated. It is suspected that a 1- to 5-percent infection rate accompanies insertion of an IUD.

- Abortion can lead to the risk of infection at a rate "conservatively estimated to be from 1 to 5 percent. Hasty or vigorous dilation of the cervix, especially in very young women, may cause permanent

damage to the cervix. A damaged cervix may result in lost pregnancy, said the author.

- Infertility is not a female condition. In almost half the cases, the man is involved. A breakdown reveals that the woman is the cause of about 40 percent of infertility, and the man the same. The couple share a problem in the remaining cases.

- Infertility is caused by physical factors in 90 percent of cases. It is not usually due to psychological factors.

- Some infertility is curable. Over 50 percent of couples who are treated will respond and conceive.

- Fertility has nothing to do with the ability to have sexual relations.

- Certain precautions may reduce the chances of infertility. For example, any infection of the reproductive tract in either male or female should be treated immediately by a doctor. Prepubescent boys should be immunized against mumps. Mumps can be accompanied by inflammation of the testes which may lead to infertility.

- Women with irregular menstruation periods are "probably not a good candidate for birth control pills," Menning pointed out. The choice to use an IUD should be made carefully. It should not be inserted when any infection of the reproductive tract is present and should generally be removed if a subsequent infection develops.



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## on the agenda

CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
31555 11 Mile Road  
City Council Agenda

Regular Meeting  
Sept. 7, 1982, 7:30 p.m.

Unfinished Business:

- Consideration of enactment of zoning map amendment C62-285, Section 10, 3.34 acres on North side of 12 Mile, east of Kendallwood Drive. Proponent, Farmington Hills Planning Commission.

- Consideration of enactment of City Code Amendatory Ordinance C-11-82 sidewalk maintenance.

- Consideration and review of City Code Amendatory Ordinance, coin-operated amusement devices.

New Business:

- Consideration of proposed agreement with Rosford Hospital on transfer of title of the Frank Shaw house and two story Greek Revival house to the Historic District Commission.

- Consideration of proposed agreement with Holloway Sand and Gravel Co. for refuse disposal.

- Consideration of request from Tom Shumaker of Sharon Development for vacation of proposed Drake Road right-of-way, and adoption of resolu-

tion 1.

- Consideration of awarding bids for construction of sewer to serve the Baptist Manor Senior Citizen complex, Drake and Freedom Roads.

- Consideration of approval of payment of easement and right to connect to Farmington Christian Center sewer.

- Appointment to Farmington Area Commission on Aging.

- Consideration of designation of Project District Area for Personnel Management, Inc.

- Consideration of appointment of outside directors for Personnel Management, Inc.

- Consideration of setting public hearing date for a Project Plan for Personnel Management, Inc.

- Consideration of designation of Project District Area for Holset Eng'g. (formerly Cummins Engine).

- Consideration of ratifying the appointment of outside directors for Holset Engineering Project.

- Consideration of setting a public hearing date for project plan for Holset Engineering Project.

- Recommends the adoption of a resolution approving intersection improvements at Nine Mile and Inkster Road.

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