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— Tom Call



Myrna Henderson and Tom Call, known in this area as Farmington Public School teachers, are known from Ontario to Ohio as co-hosts of the award-winning radio talk-show, Family Forum.

'Savvy approach' wins 2 educational awards

By Lorraine McClash
staff writer

"Family Forum," the hour-long radio talk show put together by two Farmington Public School teachers, has won two educational awards.

The awards were won by Myrna Henderson and Tom Call less than 18 months after the two began communicating with parents about their children through radio.

This spring they were given the School Bell Award for best educational programming through an electronic media. The award was given with a comment that described the program as "a savvy approach to reach parents."

On the heels of this came the E. Dale Kennedy award from Michigan Education Association, given each year to encourage well planned, year-round public relations and communications programming between the schools and the public.

Henderson and Call are their own producers, directors, writers, researchers, technicians, engineers, seekers of guests and on-the-air hosts who are heard from 10-11 p.m. every Sunday on WXYZ-Radio.

THE FAMILY Forum format has a double purpose.

Professionals can speak to a mass audience reaching many they would never reach in their private practice. Small workshops, seminars or lectures can be given to groups with a special interest.

Further, Henderson says, "By calling in to a radio talk show the caller who might be inhibited from voicing his problem at a PTA meeting, feels free to spell out that problem anonymously. 'Hopefully along the way we've reached another who may have that same problem that can be helped by our guest speaker.'"

The guests are the professionals who have spoken on a number of topics

from "Bed Wetting" to "Growing Up in a Nuclear World."

"And we'll never run dry," Call said. "There is always an issue, always a problem, always room for help to be given in a multitude of areas."

Something else that has never run dry is the list of professionals the co-hosts can call on. "That's always been a surprise to us. We tape live at 10 p.m. and with that time slot we expected some refusals. But no one, not a one we asked as a guest has ever said no. We even had one drive from East Lansing to be on the program on a Sunday night," Henderson said.

NOT TOO LONG after Family Forum went on the air, Call and Henderson had to find a third party to screen the phone calls coming in because the number was exceeding the time allowed for all the questions to be answered.

"As soon as we announce the (phone

number now all five lines light up," Call said.

In addition to knowing they are doing the job they set out to do in dispensing professional advice and information, there have been a few bonuses along the way.

Callers will call back to say thanks. Callers will relate their own experience in a particular child-parent problem to help another caller with the same problem. The co-hosts are in a position to act as a referral service.

There was a lot of feedback that we know did some good on a program we had on adoption and foster care," Call said. "We know we provide a support system to help people weather their storms. When someone calls and says 'try this' that's another link in the network."

One of the most recent bonuses was securing a \$5,000 grant from the Gansel Foundation. The money will be

used to send youth from Farmington Chapter, Michigan Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, to summer camp this year.

THE GRANT was written by Henderson, who had never written a grant proposal before. But then, neither she nor Call had any previous experience in radio when they sold the idea of Family Forum to Detroit-based WCAR-AM radio for its first 3 weeks.

That venture was financed in part by themselves, and in part by Farmington Education Association and Michigan Education Association.

Before the 3 weeks were gone, the two were contacted by WCZY-FM and offered the one hour per week public service slot.

"Now we don't even have a contract. Nobody asks what topic we're going to be talking about next week and we've talked on some pretty sensitive issues,

Tough Love, Teen Sexuality. We just fly on our own now," Call said.

Call admits that being obligated to every Sunday night on the air has on occasion gotten a little oppressive, but only during mid-week.

"When Sunday night does come it isn't long before the juices start to flow and we're off again on a real high because we know we're doing something important," he said.

Neither receives any wages for their work in Family Forum.

"We're both parents and know what a hard job that is," Henderson said. "We know that all parents need all the help they can get."

Henderson is mother to four young adults. Call is father to two.

Both are speech pathologists. She divides her time between Longacre Elementary School, Farmington High School and Our Lady of Sorrows Elementary School. He works with children in Cloverdale.

Rabbi says youngsters should be taught about death

By Sherry Kahan
staff writer

WHEN IT COMES to death, children are the forgotten, said Rabbi Earl Grollman in a talk last week at St. Edith Church in Livonia. An author of several books on death and bereavement, Grollman emphasized again and again that children must be talked to after a death in the family. And they must be listened to.

His talk was sponsored by Hospice Support Services, which is based in Westland and which aids persons who wish to die at home.

"When we deal with death with children, we don't listen to them," he continued. "We talk to them, we want to explain to them, but we are not tuned in to where they are."

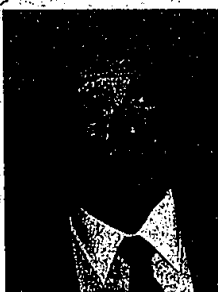
He said that research at Harvard has revealed that 44 percent of the time, a child will walk into his home and see people whispering and people crying, and no one will say his mother has died, his father has died.

He added that adults say, "I can't handle this. How can my poor child understand what is going on?"

THIS FEELING of the less said the better was exhibited by teachers in a high school in Wayland, Mass., at which there had been an unusual number of deaths, the most recent being a physical education teacher, Grollman, who works at Beth El Temple Center in Belmont, Mass., was invited to talk to the students about death.

"I didn't realize there had been a petition by the teachers saying, 'He's been dead two weeks. Don't disturb these poor kids because to talk to children about death is un-American.' I swear this was the word used in the petition."

Grollman also referred to principal of an Oakland County school, with whom he came in contact when he did a CBS special at Oakland University.



He wanted to speak about death with children in the program, so he contacted the principal to ask to have students participate.

After indicating he didn't think anyone would be interested, the principal guessed that "maybe five kids" would want to go. About 280 turned up.

"They needed to talk; they wanted to talk," said the speaker, who welcomes the fact that death is coming out of the closet.

BY THE TIME Grollman gave his evening talk about death and children, he was at the end of a long day in Livonia. It had started at a breakfast for the clergy held at Schoolcraft College at which he discussed grief.

It was followed by an afternoon workshop on various aspects of death held at St. Edith and sponsored by Hospice Support Services. There, Grollman, director of the organization, said that attending were people from Indiana, Ohio, Windsor, Port Huron and Alpena.

"By the time a young person is 18, he

'If they want to cry, let them cry. You can cry, too. That's how children learn, when you cry in their presence. What children need most of this time is to be held and touched.'

— Rabbi Earl Grollman

has seen about 18,000 deaths on TV — killings, murders and maimings," the rabbi said. "But they don't see death as a process, and that once it is completed in terms of the funeral, the pain continues."

To a small child death is reversible, he said. Bang, bang. You're dead, but you're really not dead.

"They're confused. They go to the funeral. They don't understand why some of us are crying. They wonder why dirt is being thrown on the casket when grandpa may want to come out," Grollman said. "At about the age of 10 they understand the law of death governs us all."

Older children think they are immortal. A teen group once told him that because of technological advances, "we will never die, we'll become plonks."

GROLLMAN SAID he believes that eventually there will be education about death in the schools. "But teachers must learn how to handle this inevitable circumstance," he said. Earlier

he had said that parents should call their child's school after a death because otherwise "teachers have no understanding that something significant has happened."

Physicians also have trouble with death, he said. "Death means their own failure," they feel responsible.

Physicians, teachers, parents and the world in general would help children considerably, in his opinion, if they used proper terminology for death.

"The word most frequently used in hospitals is 'expired,' he said. Others say the person has gone to sleep, making children afraid to go to bed at night."

"The reason grandma died was because she was old and sick," is another explanation. All of us are old as far as children are concerned, Grollman said, and children may get frightened if those they love become ill.

"When speaking to children make a line of demarcation between a benign illness and a life-threatening one," he said.

To say that God took the person because He loved him, could set up worries with the child who may believe God loves him too. To say the person passed away or went on a long journey also is puzzling. Passing is what children do at school. And why is everyone crying if he is only going on a trip?

SOME FUNERAL directors have a room called a slumber room, he said. Grollman would prefer the Hebrew word used, Shalom room. That means hello, goodbyes or peace.

"Say they died," he said. "Let them know there is pain. Help the child by telling him he may have different feelings, and it's OK."

Children often can feel guilt after a death, thinking it was something they said, did or even thought that caused the death.

"Most children feel responsibility for Kennedy's death," Grollman said. "It

doesn't make sense, but it doesn't have to."

He mentioned a case in which a son, many years after the death of his sister, told his mother he thought he had killed her because of his jealous thoughts.

Grollman would have parents introduce topics to the child to encourage discussion, saying that some people think their thoughts might be responsible for the death, but that's not true. Or letting the child know it is all right to be angry or upset.

CHILDREN are upset by death, he said. Many regress and wet the bed or do poorly in school. One study showed that of 80 young children who experienced the death of someone significant to them, 79 had grades that went down.

They also have more illnesses, and some hit others because they feel hurt.

"If they want to cry, let them cry," he said. "You can cry too. That's how children learn, when you cry in their presence. What children need most at this time is to be held and touched."



Melanie Churella

Kite flyers wanted for the Great Sci-Fly

The second annual Great Sci-Fly takes place on Detroit Science Center grounds Saturday, July 9. Four contests for kite flyers of all ages start with registration at noon.

Two sprint races for highest kite are planned, one for children under 12 and the other for 12 years and up. Prizes may also be won for most unusual kite. It must be able to fly. The fourth contest is for the most attractive kite made from Farmer Jack's newspapers.

A special prize will be awarded to the oldest kite flyer present. As for the Columbus kites donated by Farmer

Jack go to first place winners in each of the four contests. Other prizes include kites from the United States and the Sky Line Kite Shop in the Renaissance Center, and family memberships to the Detroit Science Center.

Members of the Swedish Club welcome in the summer solstice with "Midsummer Festival" Saturday and Sunday on the club grounds, corner of Sixth and Freedom roads.

There is no admission to the grounds for guests who want to enter the games and contests, visit the booths, shop for imports and eat Swedish foods.

A highlight of the festival is the traditional raising of the Maypole, set for Sunday afternoon.

KITES MAY be any shape or style, and there is no fee for entering. A display of unusual kites is in the science center now. The Education Department of the science center holds kite

workshops every Tuesday and Thursday during June and July for those who wish to make their own kites and learn more about the aerodynamics of kiting. Call 577-8400 for information on workshops or the contest.

The festival begins at 3 p.m. Saturday and at 10:30 a.m. Sunday. A buffet dinner is offered Sunday only.

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Title holder to crown 1983's Miss Charm

Melanie Churella, who won the title of Miss Farmington in 1980 and the title of America's Miss Charm in 1982, will relinquish that title Saturday, July 9, in Washington, D.C.

During the July 4-9 pageant festivities, 177 contestants from 46 states will be vying for Miss Charm national titles on several age levels.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Churella of Farmington, Melanie will be a senior at Michigan State Univer-

ty this fall, where she is pursuing a degree in communications, with emphasis in business and musical theater.

During her reign as Miss Charm, she received a key to the city of Las Vegas, performed at nursing homes and child-family centers, she judged local pageants and studied in New York City.

She will help host the pageant, perform during pageant night, and crown America's Miss Charm for 1983.