

After infants' deaths Group comforts parents

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

When a baby dies unexpectedly, parents can become as much a victim of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome as their child.

"There isn't anything to prevent (SIDS). The community doesn't understand the impact on the family. It's very difficult to bury your own child. It's a very big blow," said Karen Braniff, a nurse and Wayne County Coordinator for the SIDS Center at Detroit's Children's Hospital.

Often suspicion mingles with sympathy in family members, friends and neighbors.

Penny Lisewski's five-month-old son died eight years ago. Because she and her husband took out life insurance four days before their son died, the firm investigated.

"They interviewed neighbors, some of whom didn't really know us. One woman we didn't know very well came to the door and asked, 'Did you strangle your baby?'"

"It was three weeks after (the baby's death). I just felt apart," said Lisewski, a member of the Michigan Chapter of National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Foundation. The group supports SIDS research, lectures on the topic before any group and helps other parents faced with an infant's death.

IN CONJUNCTION with "golden oldies" radio station WHND-AM, the group is sponsoring a fund-raiser for



"If there are other children in the home, it's hard for them to understand why the baby isn't there anymore."

— Karen Braniff
Coordinator
of SIDS Center
in Children's Hospital

SIDS research at 6 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 23 in the Troy Hilton Inn, Stephenson at Maple, Troy. Tickets for the 1990-1991 dance party are \$7.50 per person. They are available at CTC outlets and at the door.

Research into the sudden death of infants has yet to yield a single explanation as to what causes seemingly normal, healthy babies, usually between two to four months old to die in their cribs. There have been some reported cases in which children as old as 22-months-old have succumbed to SIDS. It strikes babies of all races and econom-

ic groups in urban and rural areas. An estimate two of every 1,000 babies born in the United States will fall victim to SIDS.

Most experts believe there isn't one main cause of these deaths. In recent years, babies with apnea, who have episodes of start-stop breathing, have been recognized as potential SIDS victims.

"Some people know their baby was apneic. But in some situations the babies were attended by medical personnel and they were unable to bring them back," Braniff said.

HOME MONITORING programs for these babies or for subsequent children of parents who've lost a child to SIDS is available as a precautionary measure. The unit, about the size of an average clock radio is attached to the crib and costs about \$1,900. But monitoring isn't a fool-proof preventative measure, cautions Braniff.

Research also allows the SIDS foundation to continue its campaign to educate health care professionals and police officials about the syndrome.

In some cases, police still question or jail people whose infants have died of SIDS, according to Pamela Nelson, of Livonia. Nelson's three-month-old daughter died of SIDS in October 1978. While Braniff commends the Wayne County Coroner's office for its willingness to assign SIDS as a cause of death, she notes that in other counties coroners often blame pneumonia or suffocation as causes of deaths in the belief that it will make the death easier for the parents to bear.

While research aims at isolating the causes of SIDS, each new revelation can be painful to surviving family members.

"Everytime there's a newspaper article on the cause of SIDS, the phone rings off the hook," Nelson said.

"Even if you realize there's nothing you could have done you think maybe they'll find out what caused it and maybe you could have prevented it," Lisewski said.

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community calendar

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WILLIAMSBURG WREATH

Wednesday, Nov. 9: One-session workshop teaches how to create a holiday wreath in the style of Williamsburg, Va. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Farmington Community Center. Fee is \$10, payable in advance with registration, plus materials fee paid to instructor.

TRIBUTE

Thursday, Nov. 3: Farmington Players production of "Tribute" performed as a benefit for Universalist-Unitarian Church of Farmington at 8 p.m. in the Players Barn Theatre on 13 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads, followed by champagne afterward with the players. Tickets available from Gus Manheimer, 349-7713 or Maria Blackinton, 624-4865.

POISON CONTROL

Thursday, Nov. 3: "Poison Control" program led by representative of Children's Hospital Poison Control Center, at 7:30 p.m. in Farmington Hills Branch Library, 12 Mile, east of Farmington Road. Program sponsored by Farmington Youth Assistance Pre-school Committee as a public service. No charge.

MAKE-IT-BAKE-IT-SEW-IT

Thursday, Nov. 3: "Make It, Bake It, Sew It," auction begins at 7:30 p.m. in Farmington Community Center, Farmington Road north of 16 Mile, sponsored by Welcome Wagon of Farmington. Auction proceeds earmarked for S.E. Michigan Hospice and Adults for Kids. No admission charge. Complimentary refreshments.

Month spotlights learning disabled

October is "Learning Disabilities Month," and Farmington has one of the largest chapters of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities in Michigan.

A learning disabled child is a child of normal, potentially normal, or above normal intelligence who does not perform well in school because of disorders in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language.

The chapter is an entirely volunteer organization of parents and professionals and is non-profit. It provides understanding for parents who so often feel very much alone as they face frustration, fears and problems coping with a learning disabled child. The chapter hosts monthly meetings open to the public and also publishes a monthly newsletter.

A perceptual motor development gym program, which offers help to the child's coordination, self-image and self-esteem, is also provided along with a special typing program taught by an occupational therapist.

club circuit

JUNIOR WOMEN'S CLUB of Farmington Hills meets at 7:30 p.m. tonight in the home of Cheryl Patel, 31249 Vesper Drive in the Rolling Oaks subdivision.

Guests for the evening will be representatives from Casual Corner Dress Shop who will show new winter fashions. Membership information may be obtained by calling Eleanor Gurlinger at 555-2465.

COMMERCE TOWNSHIP AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY meets at 8 p.m. tonight at Stonecroft in Walled Lake. Stonecroft is on Pontiac Trail about half a mile south of Maple. Guest speaker for the evening will be Dr. Karl R. Hosford, who will speak on "The History of Conservation in Michigan."

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, Farmington Hills Chapter, meets at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile between Farmington and Orchard Lake roads.

The subject will be "Opportunities After High School," and representatives from several area colleges will make presentations. The general public is invited. No charge.

PARENTS WITHOUT PARTNERS, Farmington-Southfield and Livonia-Redford chapters, join to host a family halloween party from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23, at Duff's, Plymouth and Middlebelt roads in Livonia. Members from all chapters and their children are invited. For more information, call Barb at 478-3298.

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN, Farmington Chapter, meets at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 1, for a dinner followed by a program at the Buggy Works Restaurant, Orchard Lake Road south of 13 Mile Road. Program for the evening will be "Financial Planning." Newcomers are invited to make dinner reservations by calling Elaine Cuthler at 288-1112 or 963-8141.

WISER (Widowed in Service) meets at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 1, for the Plymouth Historical Museum, Main and Church streets, for a program called "Sound Nutrition." Irene King, a nurse and widowed mother of seven, will offer clinical experience on sound nutrition for the single person, as well as talk about chemical misuse and dependency. The meeting is open to all widowed persons without charge.

INDOOR LIGHT GARDENING SOCIETY OF AMERICA, Metro-Detroit Chapter, meets Wednesday, Nov. 2, at 7 p.m. at the Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile. Speaker will be Bob Clarke, the horticultural supervisor of the Belle Isle greenhouse and conservatory. He will give a demonstration of the use of natural greens in table arrangements, wall decorations and wreaths for the holiday season. For more information, call Nancy Stomont at 267-7109 or 534-7284.

Chapter of NOW at 7:30 p.m. in Room 308, J. Building, Orchard Ridge Campus, Oakland Community College. Admission is \$3, at the door.



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