

# Children at risk

## Help comes for the 2 million youngsters who are reported missing every year

By Richard Leach  
staff writer

**T**HE NUMBER of American "children at risk" is staggering, according to Marian Clarke Droll.

"Nearly two million American children are missing at some time during

the year," said Droll, a White House adviser on domestic issues.

"Eighty percent of them return home safely. Many of the rest never do."

Droll discussed America's neglected, abused or kidnapped children when she spoke before Family First, a local women's family and pro-life group, last

week at Mr. McGlincy's Tin Goose Restaurant in Detroit.

Every year some 5,000 children are criminally abused, sexually abused or murdered, Droll said. Two thousand of the unidentified bodies that turn up in municipal morgues are those of children or teens.

Another 150,000 children are kidnapped by non-custodial parents, which sometimes can be as shocking an experience as being abducted by a stranger, Droll said. Spending life alternately in hiding or on the run can be emotionally devastating, she said.

DROLL maintained that the Reagan administration has taken steps — and will continue to take steps — to help these children.

As a special assistant to the White House Office of Planning and Evaluation, Droll reports directly to Bruce Chabot, deputy assistant and acting deputy coordinator to President Reagan.

Since she works out of an office in the White House itself, she has gotten to know firsthand many of the "powers behind the throne."

Among her duties is to serve as speechwriter for attorney general-designate Edwin Meese.

But her main job is to identify and analyze domestic issues.

Droll said the government took a major step against the problem of missing children with the opening last June of a National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The center has a toll-free number to handle inquiries and information on missing children and offers assistance to law enforcement officers, state and local institutions, and private citizen groups trying to find missing children. The center also works to promote public awareness of the problem to prevent tragedies from happening, she said.

"It's always been easier to find a lost car than a lost child," she said. "This (the center) should change that."

THE ADMINISTRATION also has supported a joint Justice Department-FBI project designed to nab serial killers, the CASA (court-appointed special advocates) program, and the Child Protection Act of 1984, she said.

Under CASA, volunteers serve as special advocates for runaways and other children in court. The program already has been implemented in 26

states, including nine counties in Michigan, but needs to be expanded, Droll said. Wayne County, for instance, does not have a CASA program.

The Child Protection Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by the president in May, stiffens the penalties for those convicted of selling or producing child pornography. Two federal task forces are working on cracking down on child porn, most of which is imported into the United States from Holland and Denmark, she said.

The administration also is pushing to change federal law to give the courts and law enforcement agencies more power to detain runaway children. Within the last decade, incarceration over runaways only a few hours or several days at most, depending on the state, she said.

The administration is proposing that children who are in danger of destroying themselves or being destroyed by others be placed in staff-secured facilities, not a place with bars or guns, Droll said.

"They would likely be held anywhere from 30 to 90 days, always subject to judicial review."

CRITICS of such a change say it would allow some judges to abuse the law and create the same kind of abuses

that led to the change in the first place. But Droll said the change would work with the proper safeguards.

"I understand because of past abuses why there might be some caution," she said. "We don't want to go back to the other side. We want to walk the middle."

During the Family First meeting, Droll also promised to give the president a letter from the Ferndale-based Citizens Against Pornography. A spokeswoman for the group, Jean Ruhl-

man of Ferndale, said the letter asks the president to have the U.S. attorney general order state attorneys general to conduct a general crackdown on pornography.

A Grosse Pointe resident, Droll commutes regularly between her home there and a Washington-area apartment. Before joining the Reagan administration in 1983, Droll had worked as a speech writer and public issues specialist for Michigan Consolidated Gas.



### retirement memos

**Margaret Miller**

## Grandparenting gets a touch of quality

"Quality time" is a term mentioned often by those who specialize in family relationships.

I used to hear it frequently when I interviewed such folks for this newspaper. They were talking about using creatively the relatively short time segments that working mothers, for example, can spend with their children, or that career-oriented marriage partners can save for each other.

A friend brought it back to my mind recently, and I have to agree with his comment that it's a rather unsatisfactory substitute for enough time in the nuclear family.

But I found myself thinking a lot about quality time when Joe and I were with our grandchildren in Michigan this fall.

THERE WAS MUCH long-to-be-remembered quality in those minutes and hours we enjoyed with Katie and Danny.

We were with them a lot in their home and at the lake cottage we rented. For quite a bit of this time we were in the baby-sitting role, so establishing good rapport was necessary to give good quality to our togetherness.

We had 3-year-old Katie at the cottage with us for a couple of days. We took her to the playground and watched in amusement and needless apprehension her "special tricks" on monkey-bars and slide. She showed us her

swimming, and Grandpa Joe took her fishing. We played cards and read books through a raining afternoon.

At her home, we took her to the park and helped her play with new birthday toys. At her request, she went with us to the airport to pick up her aunt visiting from Maine.

IT WAS all time of marvelous quality. WITH DANNY, just 4 months old, the quality was a little different. He was just beginning to object to strangers and he placed grandparents in that category.

But time was no less precious when it was used trying to calm his cries and comfort him. And there's no way to describe this granddaddy's joy when Danny finally smiled over a bottle and chorled in response to a bit of jiggling.

WE BROUGHT back to Florida a good supply of pictures and a tape with Katie talking and singing, with Danny sounds in the background.

But we also brought back memories of adding new bonds to some very special relationships. We're already anticipating the quality time for grandparenting that we're sure the future holds.

Margaret Miller was Suburban Life editor for Observer Newspapers for 16 years. She and her husband Joe have retired to Florida, where she writes Retirement Memos.

## Choreographer visits

Broadway choreographer Henry LeTang will make Jacqueline Ammond's Dance Spectrum in Farmington Hills a stop on his current six-city teaching tour. He will be teaching tap classes there this month to dancers and teachers from throughout the Midwest.

He comes from Los Angeles and a choreographing engagement in Francis Ford Coppola's new movie, "Cotton Club." He will be starting work on a new Broadway musical when the tour is finished late this fall.

LeTang's creative talents have marked New York stage and television productions for more than four decades and were recently displayed in the Broadway hit "Sophisticated Ladies" which earned him a Tony nomination and the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Choreography.



Henry LeTang

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