

# Kids

## Help begins at home

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ty and in Western Wayne County and Detroit.

Only with a caring community and family network can statistics be lowered, she said. Within the 43 communities of Wayne County alone, 4,500 formal juvenile petitions are filed in one year, while the court handles 3,000 other situations without formal petitions.

Lack of adequate facilities to treat and rehabilitate these people is where the court system fails, according to the judge.

"WE HAVE to return children to the same places . . . in the same communities and the same neighborhoods. Treatment is not consistent. That's why people are here — they need help."

Courts will continue to handle many cases until community attitudes change.

"I believe justice systems are in place to reflect the society they serve," she added. "We are there to deal with society's failures — the problem is there are too many failures."

"As long as there is chaos on our streets, there will be chaos in our courts."

NOT ONLY are parents and individual communities at fault, but we are a society that ignores children,

Barsamian believes.

Budget program cuts in youth recreation programs, the way some school districts handle truancies, and the lack of help given to young offenders reflect this attitude, Barsamian said. Money and time must be spent with children to avoid the problems that turn them into juvenile offenders.

"Schools have failed us," she explained. "If the kids are bad, they want them out. These kids don't need to be expelled . . . and sent out on the streets."

By ignoring the problem, it only becomes worse, she said. She cited statistics showing an estimated 60 percent of those incarcerated in the state prison at Jackson were neglected as children.

"What we have to do is make children a priority," she said. "Children do not represent a priority in our society. We don't hear the crying for help until he literally hits us over the head by killing someone or raping someone."

BARSAMIAN CONCURS with recent studies that emphasize early childhood education and help at an early age.

"I think that's where it (the problem) begins," she added. "We've got to stop them before they get to that point."

"The answer doesn't lie with me, it lies with you."



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Wayne County Probate Judge Gladys Barsamian gave her views on "Kids and Crime — What Can We Do?" at the 12th annual Jewish Catholic Day at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington.

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