

Who's mothering mom?

Buying the motherhood myths hinders finding one's own style

By Louise Okrusky
staff writer

There exists in Baby Boom culture enough fantasy mothers to populate a prime time television schedule. In fact, many of these figures first

showed up on the television screens of our childhood.

Donna Reed and June Cleaver managed a home, raised a family and always seemed to find enough time to put on pearls.

"How many of us wax our floors

in a dress these days? How many of us wax our floors?" said Peggy Kline, a quality of life specialist/maternal health programming consultant.

"We laugh but how much of the traditional image of perfection do

we buy?" She'll explore motherhood's myths during the breakfast kickoff for the Crittenton Women's Center, Rochester. The event is set for 8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Oct. 24 at Petruzzello's on Rochester Road, Troy.

Buying into the idea there exists one perfect style of motherhood hinders a woman searching for her own methods of dealing with a family. "We try to cram ourselves into other mothering styles. We have to find our own style. We have to find what's best for us," she said.

Motherhood's become a lot more complicated than Donna or June could have imagined. "It's much more difficult to be a mother," Kline said. "Many of us don't have role models."

There are more mothers of children under 1-year-old in the workplace than ever before. These women don't have any models they can emulate.

Mothers need support systems. They need to know that they should follow their own desires if they'd rather work than stay home. Finding quality childcare remains the key. "Mother isn't the only one to provide nurturing and a consistent environment. If mother's well-being is considered it gives a child a better mom," Kline said.

However, she gives equal respect to women who choose to stay at home. "There's the underlying message of 'you're just a mother. You went to college for four years, so now what'?"

"There doesn't need to be this silent battle between women who work and those who stay home. Each mother has her own share of guilt. For one it may be the guilt of leaving the baby. For the other it may be the feeling that they ought to be out helping with the bills. They share a whole lot in common."

Each woman has her own style of mothering. "For some, they may feel they need to work. For others, there

may be a feeling they can't handle it."

Searching for a specific mothering style means letting go of judgments. There isn't one choice. "Mother guilt is as American as apple pie. Mothers have to think of themselves first and others second," Kline said.

Childbirth or adoption doesn't automatically ready a woman for motherhood, says Kline, herself the mother of two children ages 2 and 7.

"Motherhood is a hands-on experience," says Kline, revealing her own past as a teacher in her choice of terms. "By this I mean, you learn by doing."

Experience may even teach sympathy and empathy. Before having to cope with a tired child in a mall, it's natural to blame the mother of a crying tike for exposing the rest of civilization to an unpleasant domestic scene. "Before you have a child, you know what the mothers did wrong. After you have a child, you have a new empathy for a woman caught in that situation," Kline said.

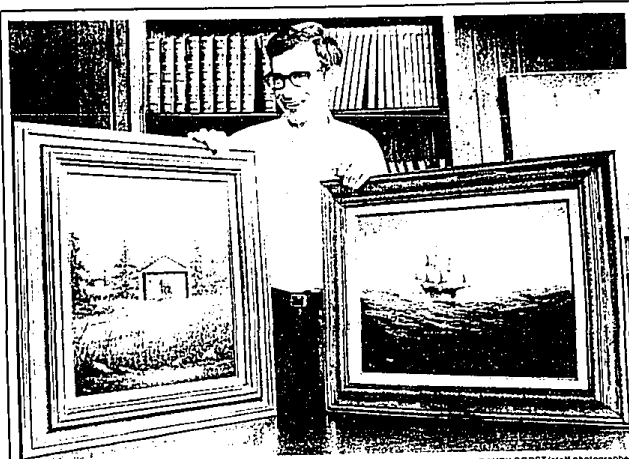
Another chance for a mom to give herself a break comes with the realization that even mothers make mistakes. "To err is human, except for

mothers," Kline said. "We want to be perfect mothers. If we make a mistake we wonder what ramifications the child will have to live with."

However, learning that mother can make a mistake can form the basis for a good lifelong understanding between parent and child. Learning early that parents are human and can apologize for their errors can take some of the stress off a child later in life when they strive to live up to an image of a mythical perfect mother.



Peggy Kline



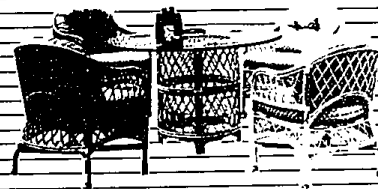
RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Landscapes-seascapes

Al Bruso, who quit his job about eight years ago to paint full time in his home studio, will show his work from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday in Farmington Community Center. The Livonia resident, who has a penchant for landscapes and seascapes, joins about 70

other artisans for the center's 15th annual Arts and Crafts Show. Guests are asked to park in Heritage Park, on Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile roads, and walk south to the center's gate.

WONDERFUL WICKER

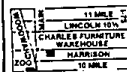


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