

Funeral director eases family grief

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She takes heart in the knowledge that even with the growing number of women entering mortuary school, it's going to take some time for people to accept yet another change.

"In the past couple of years, I've noticed more women in it — director's wives are going back to school and their daughters," she said. "I think they (women) are needed. We

are more apt to put our arm around someone. Not that that is bad or good."

PUTTING HER arm around grieving family members, many of whom are encountering a death for the first time, and helping them through the difficulties is what prompts Gilley's dedication to her new profession.

A May graduate of Wayne State University's Mortuary Science School, Gilley is awaiting the results of the state licensing exams she took in October.

"In mortuary school, you go through all phases of operating a funeral home," she said.

Some of her courses included law, management, embalming and restorative art. "Thank God for my medical background at Botsford (General Hospital, Farmington Hills). It really helped."

Before setting her sights on mortuary science, the Milford native worked at Botsford 3 1/2 years as a phlebotomist — a technologist who

draws blood for medical tests. She'd often watch confused and upset families visiting relatives in the intensive care unit.

"I would think, 'Gosh, I really wish there was something I could do,'" she said. "I like being with people. And the hospital atmosphere did a lot in getting me involved with this."

Despite her education, Gilley makes no bones that death and the grieving process is no easy matter or that grief should be taken lightly. "You go through school and take psychology and death and dying classes. There's no experience but one on one," Gilley said.

"When we receive the body, I follow up through the funeral. It doesn't stop there, though. We should always follow up. People enjoy a phone call a month later to see how they're doing," Gilley said.

As in any profession, the new-comer begins at square one. In Gilley's case, she spends time in the preparation room. "You have to start somewhere."

Does it bother her? "I think you have to understand before going to the preparation room that it's normal, it's right. It has to be done. My job is to make people presentable and to help the family through it all."

Gilley was involved with some victims of the Northwest Flight 255 crash in August. Deaths of this nature make it difficult for all involved. "Viewing a body is very important. Seeing is believing."

But families of the plane crash victims were not afforded that opportunity. "You see them walk on the plane. But you never see them

again. Those families never had a chance to have a funeral."

IT'S THE role she can play in helping families through the grieving process that brings satisfaction to Gilley.

"You get satisfaction. But not in the way most people get. So it helps when people come back in and say 'thanks.' With people, you have to be careful. You have emotions on the line, feelings. Sometimes, you yourself just want to break down and cry."

Right now, Gilley's profession is her life. She doesn't mind, though. She lives at Heenev-Sundquist, literally, upstairs above the funeral home. But besides living in comfortable surroundings, it's convenient. "Sometimes, we'll get a body at 2-

3 a.m. I get dressed, go down, work on the body and by then, it's morning and I meet with the family. So I go back upstairs and get dressed again."

The days can, and often do, get very long. But that was never a secret to her. "That's why you have to be dedicated."

Looking ahead, Gilley says that, of course, it would be nice to own her own funeral home. Having a family is important to her, too.

But just watching Walter Sundquist gives her a good idea of how time-consuming the business is and how much emotion and caring has to go into the work.

"I don't think I have ever met a more understanding man," she said. "He gives so much to this place and the families."

Personnel supported

Members of the Farmington Transportation Association, affiliates of the MEA/NEA, have voiced support for recent recognition given to school support personnel.

Wednesday, Nov. 18, was designated as Educational Support Personnel Day at both state and national levels. It is scheduled to coincide with American Education Week, which runs Nov. 15-21.

The special day was declared "to recognize the many contributions made by these vital members of the educational team," according to an FTA spokesman, who said the day was "very important to school employees."

Michigan Michigan Association President Larry Chuvonich and ESP Caucus chairman Karl Bell, were in Lansing this week to accept the ESP Day proclamation from Gov. James Blanchard.

"We are all part of one educational team," said National Education Association president Mary Hatwood Futrell at the National ESP Conference. "Without you, education could not take place in an environment conducive for learning. You share with teachers the responsibility of guiding the youth of America toward a better future."



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Specialists from many areas, all specializing in children. Led by William Montgomery, M.D., a nationally known pediatrician, the Center is staffed with specialists in many areas, including Allergy, Adolescent Medicine, Developmental Medicine, Endocrinology/Diabetes, Gastrointestinal Disease, Hematology/Oncology, Cardiology, Infectious Disease, Apnea and Child Psychiatry. But no matter what their area of expertise, all of our physicians, nurses and therapists are experts in children. All have received special training in dealing with youngsters and their unique problems. And that makes all the difference.

Even an emergency room that specializes in children. Very low emergency rooms offer what we do: a pediatric emergency medicine specialist. We have this pediatrician on duty from 10 a.m. to midnight not just to be diligent — but because children need a different kind of care in emergencies. Different, smaller, doses of medicine. And different, bigger, doses of reassurance. We've even set aside a separate part of the emergency room for children. So when it comes to emergencies you can count on Mount Carmel to not only treat children seriously, but to treat children differently.

The Neuromuscular Institute: multi-faceted care for the multi-handicapped. At the Center, we know how anxiously parents await their child's first steps. And we know the anxiety they feel when that wait is extended indefinitely because of bone, muscle or neurological damage. That's why the Center is affiliated with the Mount Carmel Neuromuscular Institute. Thanks to the NMI, hundreds of children have been able to without the specialized care available here. Founded in 1968 by Maurice Castle, M.D., a well-known orthopedic surgeon, the NMI now includes Dr. Castle and a staff of physical and occupational therapists, a psychologist and social workers.



The emotional side of health. The Center provides for the emotional needs of children, adolescents and families through three levels of psychiatric care. There's an approved outpatient program, an intensive inpatient program that was the first of its kind in the state, and a newly-added Day Hospital. The Day Hospital offers a full day of on-site treatment as well as transportation to and from the hospital.

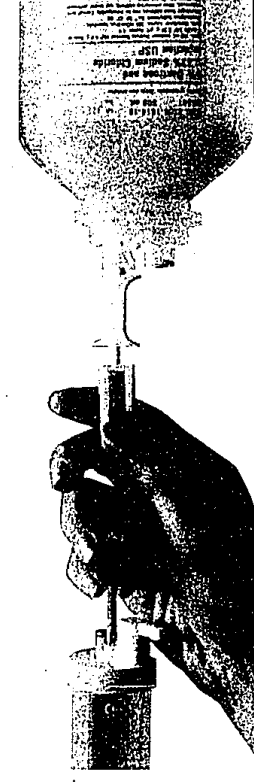
Through these programs, emotionally impaired children and adolescents are evaluated and treated. An individualized plan is prescribed for each patient for problems ranging from suicide attempts and severe depression to learning disabilities based on emotional problems. Various kinds of therapy, including individual, family and group therapy, make up a large part of the treatment.

Specialists from the mental health program are available throughout every child's stay in the Center for Child and Adolescent Medicine to provide counseling and support in stressful situations.

Nurses: Not just educated in pediatrics, but dedicated to children. There are many kinds of nurses. But only one kind works at our Center — pediatric-educated. Those with the special skills, and the special desire, to work with children. Nurses who are both knowledgeable and knowing, who can translate what a child says into what a child means. Professionals whose years of experience are also years of devotion to a single cause — helping kids get well.

At the Center, each child is assigned a team of nurses. That's so both you and your child will know who to talk to for information or in the case of problems. And our nurses not only talk to you while you're here, but they call you after your child leaves to check on his or her progress and to answer any questions about care you may have.

Nearly 50 years of commitment to children. Mount Carmel Mercy Hospital was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1939. As a division of the Sisters of Mercy Health Corporation, Mount Carmel is part of one of the largest not-for-profit healthcare systems in the country. As the system has been growing, so has the concern for the health of children and adolescents. That's why we've established the Center for Child and Adolescent Medicine. Because at Mount Carmel, now, as in the very beginning, we treat children seriously.



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