

points of view

Child care

Know the options and ask questions

SO, YOU'RE working parents with a preschooler in need of child care. If you feel like the proverbial mouse in a maze, you're not alone.

There are plenty of parents out there wondering if such a thing as quality child care exists and if it does, where is it and what it cost an arm and leg in addition to big bucks.

The experts can tell you everything you need to know about child care, but let's face it. When it comes right down to turning a child over to someone else, it boils down to gut feelings.

No one wants to have their child spend the day in a rodent-infested building where the sum total of child care is a television set. Parents want the best for their kids and being knowledgeable is one way of getting it, even if you're on a limited budget. Parents have to know what they want in the way of child care and not be afraid to ask if it's available. After all, the worst thing a center director can say is no.

"I don't know why parents are afraid to ask questions; they should," said Carol Treski, executive director of the Learning Tree Center, Livonia. "When they buy a car, they'll sit for hours with the salesman, but many won't ask questions when it comes to child care."

"Our success is based on the parents and meeting their needs, but we can't do that if we don't know what those needs are."

PARENTS CAN start their quest through one of three different agencies — the Wayne County Child Care Coordinating Council, its Oakland County counterpart and the Department of Social Services.

The two councils generally deal with licensed and regulated day care homes that are a cut above the norm.

DSS, which approves licenses and monitors child and day care centers, maintains a revolving list of licensed child care centers and home day care people. They can provide names and locations, but it's the parents' responsibility to ask the all-important questions and visit the centers first-hand.

"There's no one care form to meet all needs," said Carol Treski of the Wayne County Child Care Coordinating Council. "Many parents use a variety of types, but it comes back to parents' choices and the special needs of the child."

Parents should know about the state licensing procedure. It can be used as a guideline.

Michigan requires child and day

the Child Care Puzzle



care centers that provide care for one or more preschoolers for less than 24-hour periods to be licensed and meet minimum guidelines for such things as staffing and programming.

THE LAW also sets the qualifications for the program director and the staff, and standards for the program content, discipline, play and sleeping equipment, food services and nutrition and indoor activity space to name a few.

An indication of the quality of the programming may be the type, amount and condition of play equipment available for children. The state requires that it be appropriate for the developmental needs and interests of the children and for the number of children present. And it must be safe, clean and in good repair.

But parents should keep in mind that those requirements are minimum, said Louise Mosteller, regional director for Children's World of Michigan Inc.

"They're basic requirements that, if used by people who care about what they do, are good," Mosteller said. "As a parent it scares me and as a child care giver it scares me that there are centers out there that meet the requirements and that's that."

There's more that parents can do, but it does take an effort. Quality child care doesn't fall like pennies from heaven even though quality child care can be a Godsend.

Personal referral is one way of locating a good child care center. One parent has a good experience at a center and tells someone else about it.

WORKING PARENT Cathy Goebl also suggests thoroughly investigating a center and getting recommendations from people who use it. And don't make a decision based on just one visit, she added.

"As a parent, I'd thoroughly investigate the center I was interested in. I'd make sure you can come in and visit at any time," she said. "And I'd see if they have blanket permission

slips to take your child out of the building anytime without letting you know."

You also may need to get your employer involved, not necessarily financially, but as a resource. Leaving a job to care for a child not only represents a loss of income for a family, but also a loss of a good worker by the employer.

With a little encouragement, you may be able to get your employer to help in setting up a referral service for employees. Knowing where to start can minimize the trauma.

And once in the child care mode, consider the time you spend with your child especially if the youngster is in a full-day setting.

West Bloomfield psychologist Dr. Stephen Nugent recommends parents have as much contact with their children as possible. The nurturing and interaction between working parents and children should be positive.

"Raising a child means more than feeding and clothing them," he said.

Organ donor

It's easy to give the gift of life

ONE OF THE better holiday gestures we know is to will extended life to others through the gift of a body organ.

Two recent events bring home the point.

Dick Headlee, Farmington Hills businessman and state political figure, sent a warm Thanksgiving card recently to friends and well-wishers. Headlee, you'll recall, had only a few months to live because of defects in his heart. Through a program at Latter Day Saints Hospital in Salt Lake City, he received a transplanted heart. That much is common knowledge.

WHAT MAY BE less well known is that the young man who died and willed his usable body parts to medicine helped five people in addition to Headlee.

Besides his kidneys, liver and corneas from both eyes. Despite his untimely death, he helped no less than six people.

The story doesn't end there. Two valves from Headlee's heart were used to help others, raising the total number of beneficiaries to eight.

Early in December an Oakland University freshman, Kathy Mussili



Tim Richard

of Roseville, received a transplanted heart in Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. At 18, she was the youngest of 60 people to receive a transplant there. Her donor was a 17-year-old Kentuckian killed in a vehicle accident.

Now we come to the action part of this holiday message.

MICHIGAN HAS a program whereby each of us, in the event of death, can assure that usable body parts — not only organs but skin and bones — can be transplanted to others.

Because many potential donors die of injuries from auto accidents, one effective method to signify your willingness to donate an organ after death is to sign a little medical alert form and paste it on the back of your driver's license.

No need to go through probate. No need to have it notarized. Two people who know you need to witness it.

That's all.

Kathy Mussili's siblings all have signed such forms on their drivers' licenses when they got them at age 16, according to Dianne Mussili, their mother. She said the family believes:

"Once the soul is gone, you don't need your physical body — and it can help someone else."

You will be sent such a slip by the Secretary of State's office when your driver's license is renewed.

And if your license has months or years to run, you can pick up an "anatomical gift" form from any Secretary of State branch office, either from the pamphlet rack or a clerk.

IF AN UNLICENSED loved one of yours is near death, a state law, PA 188 of 1986, requires the attending physician to notify you and inquire about your permission for an organ donation after death occurs. It will be a sad time, of course, but think of it the way the Headlees and the Mussilis do.

In this season, Christians celebrate the birth of one who miraculously helped the blind to see and the lame to walk. In extreme circumstances, many of us may be able to help do the same.

Season sends out mixed signals



Rich Perlberg

THIS IS A tale of two stories. One is about a dream that may turn into a nightmare. The other is about a nightmare that is turning into a happy ending.

The dream was Joyce Swan's. In August she opened Absolute Joy among the boutiques in the Franklin Savings Center at 12 Mile and Northwestern in Southfield.

About two weeks ago, some low-life (let's hope it was singular) broke into her store and cleaned out all of her stock. The only thing left were some vile and racist graffiti spray painted on the wall. Swan is black; it can only be presumed that the jerk who broke into her store was not.

A week later, the vandal struck again. This time he couldn't break in, so he left his message of hate sprayed on her store window.

THE LOSS from the first incident included the presents she was giving to children at a Santa party on Monday. Even though it cost her more, Swan bought new items and the party went on as scheduled. "I could never say it has been cancelled to a child," she said.

That shows you how nice Joyce Swan is. But it doesn't mean there is

But there are also some animals who won't show compassion to people because of the color of their skin.

a happy ending.

Swan is concerned about the hateful minds that figure a person is fair game because of the color of her skin. Those minds might be responsible for the flat tires on her car and for the hate mail she has received.

"I don't like to be intimidated," she said. But she admits that she is troubled by the thought that someone who doesn't even know her wishes her skin ill will.

SUNDAY NIGHT a different type of story unfolded. Peggy Brundage of Birmingham and her fiancé were planning to Christmas shop but instead came to the rescue of a golden retriever that was struck and

should be put out of its misery. Sure, was the answer. That will be \$100.

INSTEAD, PEGGY called her father who recommended a vet named Richard Huff. Peggy reached Huff at home. "The minute I heard his voice I knew everything was going to be all right," said Peggy.

Huff said to take the dog to his office Beverly Hills Veterinary Associates. Huff left him home to meet them there. He found that the dog's injuries looked worse than they were. The bleeding was caused by torn skin but there were no internal injuries and no broken bones. It should be easy to find the dog a good home.

The dog is doing fine because a number of people were willing to show compassion to an animal. But there are also some animals who won't show compassion to people because of the color of their skin. That's unfortunate for Joyce Swan — and for us all.

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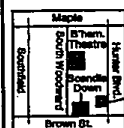
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