



PETER GALDWIN

Suiling up

Members of the Farmington Hills Fire Department Special Emergency Response Team practices with new communication equipment at its bimonthly training session Dec. 10 at fire headquarters. The equipment is used

in conjunction with encapsulated suits, which are worn when dealing with hazardous material accidents. From left are Fire Marshal Steve Hume (team leader) and firefighters Gary Micu (with mask) and Al Ellis.

Botsford's mental health unit is operating for older adults

In its continuing effort to reach out to the elderly in southeast Michigan, Botsford General Hospital has opened a specialized mental health unit.

The facility, specifically designed for patients ages 55 and older, is on the fourth floor of the Farmington Hills hospital. It will accommodate up to 25 patients for short-term treatment of acute episodes of illness.

A multi-disciplinary treatment team, including psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, a program director, clinical nurse specialist, activities therapists, social workers and psychiatric nursing staff will be available to help elderly patients and their families cope with the stress of mental illness.

According to Ruth Farrell, president of Botsford Continuing Care Corp., "The hospital is responding to a real need by adding this program to its community services."

"It would surprise people to know that, on average, one person in every four families is affected by mental illness nationwide," said Sandy Plumer, program director. "And I'm not just talking about some dramatic soap-opera-type illness. The loss of a loved one, failing health, severe financial problems or approaching retirement are all potentially stressful situations that can lead to the need

for mental health care."

THE GEROPSYCHIATRIC unit provides a multi-disciplinary, multi-functional assessment of the older patient. "Our goal is not just to evaluate the patient in terms of mental health but to do a comprehensive evaluation that will enable us to provide constructive feedback to patients and their families," said Dr. Bruce Sack, clinical director.

"To accomplish this, we work in concert with the departments of medicine, neurology, physical rehabilitation medicine and several others."

The geropsychiatric unit is designed to be cheerful and homelike.

Activities therapy, in areas like music and art, will be provided to encourage self expression among patients. Peer group interaction will be encouraged as part of the treatment process.

"We find that this environment and therapeutic approach are really beneficial to patients," said Sack. "We're trying to eliminate much of the fear and shame that has all too often prevented people from seeking psychiatric help."

Other Botsford programs for older adults include a series of seminars called "Table Topics," and a free transportation/physician referral service called "Health Ride/Health Match."

Money tapped for downtown

Farmington will spend most of the nearly \$40,000 in Community Development Block Grant money it will receive for downtown improvements.

Following a public hearing Dec. 7, at which no public comment was received, the Farmington City Council voted to use \$32,256 for downtown improvements and \$7,500 for a

home improvement loan program monitored through Oakland County.

The council approved CDBG goals last August, which called for preservation of the city's housing stock and preventing blight in the downtown area.

The \$7,500 for home improvement loans is only part of the money allocated through the Oakland County.

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