

Programs similar but not the same

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their boundaries. It was not constructive," Bush said.

OTHER MEMBERS of the 10-agency council are Mercy Center, Salvation Army, Farmington Youth Assistance, Botford General Hospital, Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus, Farmington Public Schools Community Education, Farmington Community Library and the Community Center of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

"There is no one agency in this community big enough or complex enough to satisfy all the community needs," said Community Center executive director Dorothy Pfaff. "Now we feel comfortable using each other as a resource."

The bottom line is that it's OK if the community has a choice of swimming programs offered by the various community agencies as long as the programs are popular, booked up and successful.

Two years after the council's birth, the 10-member council shares programming ideas and facilities and accommodates each other's needs and programs. The result, Potter said, is a benefit to the community.

Today, the agencies are more consumer oriented rather than concerned about a competing agency diverting their consumers. Agencies focusing on new kinds of programming and co-sponsoring of programs also are results of the 10 agencies banding together, Potter said.

The quickest example to come to mind of how the council has helped, Potter said, is to consider that both the special services department and the community center offer outdoor concerts, right next to each other at the community center and at Heritage Park on Farmington Road.

Working through the council has helped eliminate potential problems with scheduling, type of music and parking facilities, Potter said.



Dan Potter Kevin Bush

WHILE THE council has been relatively quiet in its deliberations, it will soon come out with the first-ever community directory of agency services. "This is the first visible thing the public can see coming from the council," Potter said.

The directory, expected to be distributed to each household, will tell about each agency, its services and

His business is helping business

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ages at the request of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority.

"Our number-one activity is just to answer questions," he added. "People know where to go... but sometimes want to come to someone who's on their side."

The ombudsman's office has a staff of six who are available for business consulting.

THE OFFICE receives questions on varying topics, including taxes, developing on state wetlands and employer problems with unemployment claims through the Michigan Employment Security Commission. Even when it can't help a business directly, the ombudsman's office may address an overall problem affecting state businesses. For example, "We told the DNR the Wetlands Act wasn't being administered uniformly," Allen said.

His office also tracked and reported on an "unscrupulous" inspector, who was eventually fired.

The ombudsman's staff also delves into overall issues involving the state economy — and ultimately the business climate.

ALLEN SEES three challenges toward creating a better-functioning Michigan economy.

• finding ways to equalize economic development throughout the state, so areas like Alpena, Flint and Saginaw receive a share of new jobs and industry;

• taking a harder look at health costs for employers, which is becoming a statewide concern; and

• emphasizing Michigan's strengths in manufacturing and developing new related industries.

BUT THESE challenges, he said, cannot be met until a larger issue is tackled: educating students who are the employees of tomorrow.

"We are looking at the future and saying we are going to win or lose based on our people," he said.

High dropout rates and low test scores in urban and some suburban areas are "absolutely frightening."

"We are frightened by that in Michigan. Our businesspeople are frightened by that," he added.

Allen advocates business involvement in the school system. This must be done first, he said, before reallocating or spending additional money on education.

Interagency unit serves as liaison

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

The success and cooperation of the two-year-old Council of Community Resources is paving the way for yet another organization for groups providing services to the Farmington-Farmington Hills community.

"This isn't just for recreational programming. It's for agencies, organizations that provide all kinds of services within the community," said Dan Potter, Farmington Hills special services director. "We are looking at common problems and common solutions."

The interagency council involves churches, service groups and clubs, the Council of Homeowners Associations of Farmington Hills, the police, schools and Farmington Artists Club, for example. The Council of Community Resources coordinates activities among the larger organizations such as the Farmington

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— Dan Potter
special services director

Community Library and the YMCA.

The interagency council has had two meetings. A third meeting is tentatively scheduled for January through a specific date and location has not been determined.

The organization's purpose is to help groups and agencies within the community by sharing information about events and activities.

The interagency council is designed to look at community needs and determine whether there are some needs that aren't being met and how to meet existing needs better. The hope is that better planning and scheduling and greater success for each group and the community will be the result, Potter said.

FOR EXAMPLE, two service clubs scheduling fund-raising events the same day are tapping the same sources and probably wouldn't be as successful as they would be if they scheduled different days. The council is designed to provide this coordination, Potter said.

"The groups and providers never cross paths. We need to educate to a broader perspective of what the community needs are," said Dorothy Pfaff, executive director of the Community Center of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The interagency council plans to be involved in documenting what services the community needs. At its second meeting in November, guest speaker David Ray, Oakland County Planning Division associate planner, presented the community's trends and demographics.

The 10-agency Council of Community Resources provided the impetus for the new interagency council, which has a mailing list of 150 groups in the community. Groups or organizations with questions or that are interested in participating should call Potter: 478-9573.

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