

Peer counseling

Women-helping-women service continues at Womencenter

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

JOANN GRAVES is the new coordinator for Oakland Community College Womencenter's Peer Counseling service on Orchard Ridge Campus.

'More often than not there is so much buildup of emotion that's been going on for so long you can't discern what's really going on until someone else helps you start in clarifying it and straightening it out.'

— Joann Graves

The math teacher on campus said she was drawn to the Womencenter "after hearing of all the good they were doing over there" and volunteered to coordinate the peer counseling program "after learning of the very real and serious needs" of those who come to Womencenter to talk about their troubles.

"The next session for training our peer counselors starts Jan. 19 and we're taking registrations now," Graves said. "I've taken the training myself and I can promise you it's a therapy for yourself. You've got to open up and deal with your own feelings first before you can begin to help others, and that's what the training does for our counselors."

Mary White, director of Womencenter, leads the training sessions that run from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursdays for a total of 30 hours. Each peer counseling class is limited to 12 women.

Fee for the training is \$54 and three hours per week for one semester, after completing the class, serving as a counselor in Womencenter helping peers learn how to help themselves.

White describes the completion of the training "as getting a degree in your own personal growth."

GRAVES' JOB will be to see that there are peer counselors on hand for those who choose to drop into Womencenter in J Building, scheduling those drop-in hours; and making sure the phones are manned for those who call for a specific appointment.

"Often women call us for an early morning, after work or evening appointment outside of Womencenter's regular hours," Graves said. "We somehow always can get the peer counselor to meet those requests because we're all committed to what we're doing here."

What the peer counselors are not doing is giving advice or giving training, theoretical and experiential, in listening, values clarification and problem solving. Their job is to get a

whole new handle on the problem — whatever it is — with a lot of re-thinking that deals with that person's feelings, first. Then you work with that before trying to find any solutions," Graves said. "But we do not give advice. Maybe suggestions, or referrals, but not advice."

"There's no quick fix. You can only fix yourself, and you can't do that if you don't know yourself. "More often than not there is so much buildup of emotion that's been going on for so long you can't discern what's really going on until someone else helps you start in clarifying it and straightening it out," she said.

"Something we all have to learn is to accept ourselves and Womencenter is a good place to start. No psychiatrist fees. No legal fees. No fees at all."

WOMENCENTER is open now from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 10 a.m. to noon Friday.

It is staffed entirely by volunteers, "many of whom came in looking for

some kind of help or assistance or direction or information, and just stayed on to help others." While said, Womencenter supports itself with periodic fund-raisers throughout the school year, offers a large variety of workshops for very low fees, and has initiated a host of ongoing study and support groups.

Within a very short period of time Womencenter became the base for a network of women helping women.

"You never know who is going to turn up for lunch," Graves said. "Those of us who brown bag it eat in the Womencenter. We meet volunteers who worked here years ago coming back for a visit, or the newcomer who wants to know what Womencenter is all about. We sometimes meet the scared and the distracted and we meet the woman who has turned herself around — generally after a (life) transition — and now wants to share and help others."

For peer counseling training registration, or information about any other service offered by Womencenter, call 471-7602.

Joann Graves
new coordinator
for Womencenter
Peer Counseling

Enrichment award nominees sought

The Farmington Branch of American Association of University Women is seeking nominations for its fourth AAUW Community Enrichment Award. This annual award honors a woman for her contributions to our community. We are looking for a recipient whose efforts promote fairness and impartiality for women, encourage continuing education and self-development, and cause positive changes in attitude toward women in our community. Previous honorees are Jan Dolan, Marion McCracken and Jean Fox.

Groups or individuals may submit

nominations through Jan. 31. The recipient will be announced on March 1 during National AAUW Week.

Send nominations to Rosalie Perry, 29312 Raleigh, Farmington Hills 48018.

All women who offer something special to the Farmington area are eligible for this award, except members of the American Association of University Women. Previous candidates can be re-nominated.

Nominations for this award will help AAUW select a woman whose contributions enrich the community.

Sing-a-long with lunch helps Salvation Army

A "Christmas Sing-A-Long," sponsored by the Auxiliary to the Salvation Army of Metro Detroit, will take place during lunch Friday, Dec. 16, in Kingsley Inn, Bloomfield Hills. Lively music will be provided by the Salvation Army Brass Ensemble with Bob Allison heading up the celebrity song leaders who will brighten the festivities. Gabe Zawidch, one of the owners of the Kingsley Inn, has invited the ladies to use his main dining room for their "Fun Fund-raiser."

This is a first for the auxiliary which will pattern the sing-a-long after the popular event held each year in the London Chop House and will

be the first Army Sing-A-Long in the suburbs. Ladies of the auxiliary will join in the singing as they encourage supporters to give generously. Businesses around the area are invited to reserve tables and give their staff a Christmas treat while having fun raising funds. All money raised will help support special Christmas programs for needy children sponsored by the Salvation Army of Metropolitan Detroit.

The auxiliary is the oldest Army Auxiliary in the world and is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

Reservations can be made by calling the Kingsley Inn at 644-1400.

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103rd birthday is celebrated



Catherine Alabakopoulos celebrated her 103rd birthday this month with her daughter Ange-Louis and son Andrew.

Catherine Alabakopoulos, better known as BaBa to her friends in Williamsburg Care Center, celebrated her 103rd birthday Dec. 5. Born in Greece, she speaks only in Greek but does understand English. She prefers the name BaBa, she says, because it means grandmother in her native tongue.

She has two daughters, Angelone and Elizabeth, one son Andrew, six grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. She has been widowed since 1950.

After leaving Europe, Alabakopoulos lived in Canada for five years, then moved to Michigan eight years ago to live with her daughter.

She never worked outside of her home and said she enjoyed her life of taking care of her family, baking, doing needlework, and making all of her own noodles.

"She walks on her own quite well for short distances, and with some assistance she will very literally dance from the dining room to her own room," said Saeed Chadek, activity director for the care center.

"She is a frequent visitor to the activity room for social hour every morning where she has a cup of coffee and cookies and she has a wonderful devoted family," Chadek said.

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