

# Why they're promoting 'Positively Yes'

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

If someone says "Mardi Gras," you think "New Orleans." By 1992 if someone says "Positively," you'll think "Michigan" — if Ralph Nichols has his way.

Nichols, 53, of Birmingham has made a good living (net worth: \$4 million) selling Dale Carnegie "positive thinking" courses from his American Center offices in Southfield.

He's now spreading a "Positively Yes" campaign with no profit motive — just a desire to get Michigani-ans to be upbeat to each other and to customers during a gloomy season of the year.

**BUT LET HIM explain it himself:** "The worst place and the worst month is Michigan in January. We shut down. Bills from Christmas come in. There are no holidays, no vacations, no sun for a long time. "We should be able to resist the elements."

"Randy Sher, who is a graduate of the course, came up with the idea to make the whole state of Michigan more positive."

Sher, a one-time Livonia teacher (second grade, Tyler School), is a West Bloomfield resident and president of her firm, Strategies, down Northwestern Highway a bit in Farmington Hills.

"This is Ralph's 20th year in business," she said. "We wanted to give something back to the community. That's why we started it. We didn't realize it would be as enormous."

**HERE'S WHAT'S happening:** Nichols is giving away tapes of an upbeat song about positive thinking.

He has rented Detroit's Ford Auditorium the evenings of Friday and Saturday, Feb. 3-4, for a 7:30



Ralph Nichols says that if people think positive, Michigan will have a gentler, more prosperous, healthier society.

concert by the Four Tops and motivational speeches.

It was originally for his staff of 120, their spouses or dates. But now it's open to interested companies, civic groups and his graduates.

Tickets at \$22 are available from Ralph Nichols Corp., 2777 Franklin Road, Suite 1560, Southfield 48034. The price will help cover his costs. "We never asked anybody for any money," he said.

Ford Motor Co. has a "Positively Yes" message on its 1-84 billboard.

IF IT SOUNDS a bit vaporous, Ni-

chols sees concrete benefits from thinking positively.

There would be less spouse abuse and child abuse. There would be more participation in community activities. People in Michigan's second most important industry, tourism,

would be nicer to their clients. And it's a medical fact that happy people are healthier and live longer.

"Look at Plymouth," Nichols said. "Their ice sculpture festival is now eight years old. When they started, January was the worst retail month

of the year. Last year, their January was their second best month."

Gov. James J. Blanchard sees "Positively Yes" as dovetailing nicely, thank you, with the state's "Yes Michigan" promotion.

"I'm an optimist myself," Blanchard said Monday. "The optimists are the builders. They don't build monuments to pessimists, as Paul Harvey said."

If the idea catches on, Nichols and Sher hope a major corporation can take it over, perhaps rotating responsibility in future years, and make the Michigan attitude famous.

NICHOLS IS a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy, a marine engineer and a gentleman by Act of Congress, according to his diploma. He landed here in 1968.

"The first time I was off the boat, practically, was in Detroit. I took a Dale Carnegie course. This is the first and only job I've ever had," he said.

Buying a Carnegie franchise, he expanded it to cover Michigan, Ohio and Ontario, and now rings up the biggest sales volume of any franchise in the world. His business achievements put him on a portion of the front cover of U.S. News & World Report and a two-column article headlined "Self-worth to net worth."

Randy Brouss Sher quit teaching to have children but then found no full-time jobs left when she tried to come back in the 70s.

After a stint as a legal secretary, she debated going to law school,



Randy Sher  
concept person

worked on a doctorate in psychology, then started her own business, A Better Way, helping women find jobs.

The recession of the early '80s was terrible for many but "very lucrative" for Sher, who started an outplacement service for terminated workers and helped 2,000 of them find jobs.

## 2 OCC sculptors put honors on ice

Randy Finch and Ken Kulph, culinary art students in Oakland Community College's hospitality program, walked away with the first and second-place prizes in the recent seventh annual Plymouth Ice Sculpture Spectacular.

Finch, a second-year student from Brighton, won the first-place prize of a trip for two to Montreal for his

sculpture of two horses pulling a covered wagon. He is employed at Sheraton Oaks.

Kulph, also a second-year student from Livonia and an employee of the Hyatt Regency, won a 19-inch color television for his second-place award and received the All-Carvers Award from his fellow carvers for his carving of a fox jumping through a fence.

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