

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



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Displaced Homemakers

High investment yielding program dismantled in budget cuts

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

WOMEN ACROSS the state who were working their way back into the job force were stopped in their tracks when Displaced Homemaker contracts were broken in action taken as one of Governor John Engler's budget cuts.

"We were cost effective. We did a good job," said Pat Curran, director of Office of Women and Work which administered the Displaced Homemaker program, and who will be closing the doors and turning in the keys to that office within the next few weeks.

"We've placed close to 1,000 women who went through the program," said Mary Ellen Slack from Jewish Vocational Service in Southfield. "These women are earning many times the amount of the grant our agency received from the state."

The exact amount, according to Nancy Swanborg who directs the Office of Women's Resource Center at Schoolcraft College, amounts to a 34 percent return on the state's investment.

"Over the past four years clients who completed the program have earned more than \$4 million in taxable income. The state invested \$116,000 in that four year period which is a yield of 34.1 percent, and that is just here," she said. "We are

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—Nancy Swanborg

only one of 11 sites in the state that offer the program."

"The figures she has are correct and they are also typical of every one of the 11 sites in the state," Curran said, who has directed the Office of Women and Work since its inception in 1978, and is in addition the only place in the state working women can turn to if they are having a problem about their rights.

"I FEEL TERRIBLE about this," said Dr. Radwan Curkhoury, who was forced to tell 20 women the Displaced Homemaker program was dropped in the Arab Chaldean Center in Lathrup Village last week.

"We are very disappointed," Slack said. "The program has been an investment in the workers as well as for employers who need experienced, well trained help."

"I am infuriated over the closing of the office (of Women and Work)," said Mary White, executive director of Womencenter, Orchard Ridge Campus, Oakland Community College. "Not only has Pat Curran done an excellent job with the displaced homemakers, she is our one-woman information network who keeps all of us informed on current legislation, funding, grants. And she is a strong spokeswoman for women's rights. Any question on working woman we had here has always been answered immediately for us."

"I've had questions come to this office on employee rights, civil rights, rights for pregnant women, and I can say without hesitation I am absolutely assured that 100 percent of those problems were responded to immediately by that office," Swanborg said.

As for the dismantling of the Displaced Homemaker program, Swanborg called it "penny wise and pound foolish."

Speaking for Michigan Older Women's League (OWL) Virginia Nicoll called it "financially short sighted."

Along with OWL, groups known to be in protest of the closing of the Displaced Homemaker program are Zonta, a Livonia-based philanthropic organization, and several local chapters of American Association of University Women and Business and Professional Women.

Many letters of protest have come to Swanborg from women who have gone through the program and employers who have hired them.

THE DEFINITION of a Displaced Homemaker is a widowed, divorced or separated woman, a woman married to a totally disabled man, a woman who has been primarily a homemaker for 10 years or more, a woman lacking adequate skills to secure gainful, full time employment.

While the program provided some help in evaluating and redefining

skills in contemporary terms. Help to gain confidence for the job search. Help to develop realistic goals. Help to find a job, and through economic independence, a sense of self worth and peace of mind.

In a letter to Gov. Engler, Nicoll, a resident of Farmington, wrote, "The move shows a calloused disregard for the welfare of homemakers who have been cast adrift financially after years of caring for their families."

"Last year 35 women graduates of the program at Schoolcraft College re-entered the paid labor force at an average wage of \$6.60 per hour. Together they earned almost \$4500,000 in taxable income on an investment

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Nancy Swanborg had facts and figures ready against Gov. John Engler's budget cuts that stopped the sessions which helped women get back into the job market.

Displaced Homemaker Program
Schoolcraft College

Year	# of participants employed	Average hourly wage	Potential taxable dollars at the end of 1 year
1987	27	\$6.36	\$357,178.00
1988	38	\$5.70	\$450,528.00
1989	30	\$5.97	\$372,528.00
1990	35	\$6.60	\$480,480.00
Grand Total over 4 years			\$4,005,832.00

Survival skill of the '90s

Creativity is what is needed to meet the challenges of change

Natalie Halpern occasionally writes for the O&E. She has been designing and leading workshops in creative problem solving and creative thinking strategies for more than a decade.

A creativity and communication consultant, she recently participated in the Third International Creativity Networking Conference in Buffalo, N.Y., at which 200 researchers and practitioners from 24 countries met to share insights. They were involved in the fields of management, education, the arts, technology, health care, government, the military and human resources.

Halpern works out of her West

Bloomfield home and can be reached at 851-2271.

By Natalie Halpern
special writer

Hello 1991! The beginning of a new year, with the promise of a fresh start, provides the impetus for change. Today's bleak economic and political picture certainly calls out for change. How should we deal with it? We need to find new, creative solutions to the challenges of everyday life. Creativity - for individuals, organizations or communities - has become the survival skill of the '90s. Creativity is not just the domain of writers, artists and musicians. Everyone has the potential for

creativity - being more inventive, more effective, going beyond the information given to find an idea which is new and relevant. The secret is learning how to tap into that potential by stretching the boundaries of your thinking. For some, it may be the only time they think about the act of thinking.

To shatter some myths about creativity. There is no correlation between high IQ and creativity. It is not magic "stuff" limited to gifted geniuses. Its techniques can be learned and expanded.

An aha! is the moment of insight when one sees the world, a problem, or an idea in a new way. Yet another reason to pursue the aha! is that when the mind exercises its creative "muscle" so to speak, and creates

he aha! it also produces a sense of pleasure. Researchers have found his kind of activity actually increases production of endorphins, chemicals activated at the pleasure center of the brain.

In my workshops I painlessly lead people who want to stretch beyond their habitual mindsets through a series of adventures and exercises designed to do just that. I focus on a problem solving model that works for situations in career or personal life, in individual or group-solving situations. The method can become a tool for lifetime use - it never wears out and enhances the best!

Here are some basic pointers for creative problem solving:

• Creativity flourishes in an environment of encouragement (see re-

lated story I begin with a positive attitude: believe you can be creative. Many people have been taught it is wrong to do or consider things differently from the accepted view. Harvard professor Ellen Langer calls this the state of restricted conformity and passive learning "mindlessness" in which we behave automatically and limit our capacity for creative response.

"Mindfulness," on the other hand, is when we are really aware and feel the world around us, opening ourselves to new information, playing with the relationship of ideas, and stretching the boundaries of our thinking. People who can do this are likely to be creative, whether they are artists, lawyers or bus drivers.

• Hang onto that positive attitude

by thinking of a problem as a challenge, an opportunity, or simply as a situation you would like to see changed.

• Be open to new and unusual possibilities - by looking outside the area of expertise involved. Change your perspective. Imagine yourself in someone else's shoes and look at the situation from other points of view. For example, if you are looking at a management challenge, think how a builder or artist might view it.

• Store it mentally and don't settle for the first answer which comes to mind. It's often the same way you habitually respond. Consider many possibilities and realize

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How to keep the creative juices bubbling

By Natalie Halpern
special writer

Once the pump is primed, how do you keep the creative juices bubbling? We asked that question of a number of professionals who are in occupations which rely on a high degree of creativity.

Their answers: "You'll never get an idea if you don't read, meet, challenge yourself, expose yourself to risk," says Larry Short, founder of Creative Universal in Warren, developer of custom-designed training programs to solve

the behavioral needs of industry. "The more you do, the more the pieces keep flowing. If I ever do feel blocked, I just pick up the phone and talk to friends and associates, something as simple as I need some input or opinion from you."

Short believes his creative strengths are in problem-solving and managing people, generating alternative ideas and refusing to accept the first idea which comes to mind. He elaborated, "I can synthesize facts and come up with non-judgmental alternatives. I developed a thought pattern - how will what I'm

doing today influence what happens in 2-3 years?

JIM At GUST of Stone, August, Baker Communications Co. in Troy, says being creative is "thinking outside the box." People who are creative are able to find relationships among things that other people do not.

My strong suit," says August, "is that I can see similarities in disparate situations. A designer for, example sees relationship between shapes and colors. When you talk about words, ads are the same way I

don't write ads. But I can look at them and quickly sense if they are relevant to the issues. This skill is based on several relationships.

"I refile myself through diversity of experiences. I read different material, look at different types of things, expose myself to different people. I see relationships in art, nature, society, which don't exist in the key. The key skill is being able to put things together in different ways."

MICHAEL DUNKELBERGER, pastor of Northbrook Presbyterian

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