

County gives 'respite' to burdened families

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland County has ruffled some feathers by being generous.

County commissioners Thursday appropriated \$338,000 for families of the developmentally disabled, a category of the mentally ill whose problems were diagnosed early in life and sometimes attributed to retardation.

The money is earmarked for "respite care," that is to hire trained personnel to come into the home and tend to the disabled person while parents or others providing constant attention can do other things.

Commissioners said the appropriation is unrelated to Gov. Engler's proposed cuts in mental health services.

"Respite care is crucial," said Commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills, because it enables care givers to simply get away from their burden and once refreshed, come back to resume their care-giving.

Problems arose, however, when families with mentally disabled children complained county officials are ignoring their plight. The mentally disabled are a separate category of

mentally impaired, whose problems are usually diagnosed later in life.

PARENTS OF THE mentally disabled need respite care too, explained Mary Hughes, a Madison Heights mother whose 27-year-old son is diagnosed in that category.

"It's a matter of fairness," said Richard Herrie of Franklin, the father of a developmentally disabled daughter, 26, and a mentally disabled son, 38.

People don't recognize or understand the mentally disabled as readily as they do the developmentally disabled, Herrie said. "There's a tremendous need for respite care for both."

Some families who said their plight is being overlooked wanted commissioners to allocate the money to the Community Mental Health Board so it could be used to provide respite care for both groups.

Their concern is understandable, said Agnes I. Wisner, executive director of the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC), based in Birmingham. With the state cutting back on its assistance, every family with a disabled person, at home is concerned.

"This disagreement underscores

the need for more resources for the mentally handicapped," Wisner said. "But resources are tight."

Oakland has about 400 residents with mental problems, said commissioner Charles Palmer, R-Clawson, and a member of the mental health board. "Every one of their families can use additional respite care," he said.

COMMISSIONERS REJECTED arguments that the county's appropriation should be divided. As explained by commissioner John Pappageorge, R-Troy, "We recognize the need for additional respite care. But dividing the allocation would simply water down the county's assistance."

The county's contribution was small to begin with, Pappageorge said. But to divide it would simply dilute its benefit to the point "nobody would get any real relief."

Pappageorge and others, including commissioner Roy Rewold, R-Oakland Township, suggested families with mentally disabled youngsters document their needs and, at a future date, approach the board.

"If they had a reasonable request I'm sure it would be favorably said Commissioner Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield Township.



Finessing his way...

Winning comes naturally to nine-time world bridge champion Bobby Wolff, who stopped by the Southfield bridge club Wednesday. Wolff was in Oakland County to talk about his playing strategy and promote the upcoming NEC World Junior Team Championships to be held in Ann Arbor this summer where he will coach the United States team. Above, Wolff offers some playing advice to Edith Rivkin, a regular at the Southfield club.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Hazardous waste alarms local LWVs

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Don't forget hazardous household waste.

That's the message Oakland County chapters of the League of Women Voters conveyed Thursday when they petitioned county commissioners.

The leagues, with about 600 members in Oakland County, are concerned that the county's \$500 million solid waste program addresses the need for an adequate disposal system for batteries, paint thinner and other common items that can not safely be placed in regular landfills or recycling facilities.

Shirlee Citron, a member of the Birmingham/Bloomfield league,

presented the petitions containing 3,295 signatures. League members spent hours gathering the signatures over a four-month period.

"There are many major environmental problems over which the individual has little control," Citron said. "But this is a problem in our own back yard... in our kitchens, garages and basements."

These are hazardous materials we can control providing commissioners provide safe drop-off facilities, she said.

THE SOUTHEAST Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority (SOCRRA) already has such a facility in operation, Citron said. "But everybody can't use it."

She urged commissioners to in-

clude a household hazardous waste facility in the county's plan that already calls for recycling and a waste-to-energy incinerator in Auburn Hills.

The league's advice is well taken, said Roger J. Smith, deputy director of the county's department of public works. "It's certainly a need."

"Fortunately our plan already calls for a facility for hazardous household waste," said Smith, a major architect of the county's disposal system expected to be operational by November, 1992.

The county's facility will be a revolving system, he said. There will be one central location for ultimate disposal. But it will be supplemented by a unit that goes into various neighborhoods according to a pub-

lished-in-advance schedule.

"We intend to go to the residents," Smith said. "The need is that great."

SMITH PRAISED the household hazardous waste facility of SOCRRA, saying it provided a much-needed service for member-communities. SOCRRA services 14 communities in southeast Oakland including Troy, Birmingham and Royal Oak.

It is located at the SOCRRA main office at 3910 Webster in Royal Oak. To drop off hazardous household waste, however, residents must make an appointment — by calling 288-5163 — and prove they are residents of a SOCRRA community.

Delta Zeta alums to meet

Oakland County Alumnae of Delta Zeta sorority invites area alums to a luncheon and planning meeting beginning at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19 at the home of a Farmington Hills member.

Among the topics to be discussed are ongoing service projects and philanthropic projects. Additional information is available through Glenn Paekslis, 646-5727.

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