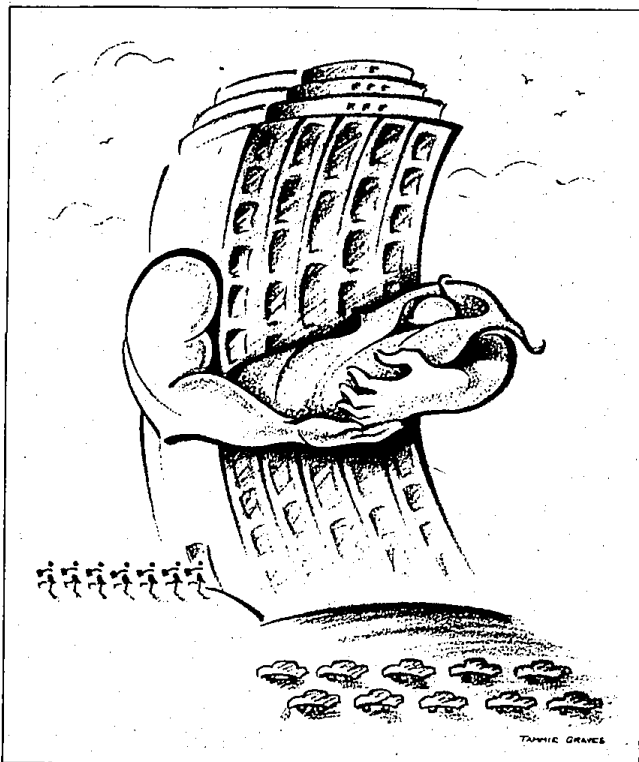


Helping out . . .



TAMMIE GRAVES

Some employers will bend to accommodate workers

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Kimberly Mitchell is a working mother.

In that, she is no different than thousands of others in southeastern Michigan.

But she is also among a slowly growing minority of working mothers who has worked out a "family friendly" arrangement with her employer.

Mitchell, communication specialist for the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments, works mostly at home.

"Some people call it telecommuting, some call it family friendly policies," Mitchell said. "I call it the best of both worlds."

When Mitchell discovered she was pregnant last year, she didn't know whether she would return to work after the birth or stay home and raise her daughter, now 9 months old.

"But as it got closer to the due date, I became more and more certain that I wanted to stay home," she said.

Mitchell said she enjoys work, but if it came down to working and putting her daughter in child care, or staying home, she was going to stay home.

SEMGOG, however, didn't want to lose her. Just as any other employer is beginning to discover, the work force is shrinking, and experienced people are getting harder to find.

"So I sat down with my boss and we discussed our options," Mitchell said. "The result? Part time, working mostly at home, some weekends and a happily employed mother."

"IF EMPLOYERS want to keep qualified people, they are going to have to work harder," she said. "To me, this is saying they care about me not only as an employee, but they also care about my needs as a parent."

But family-friendly policies are just one way businesses can help working parents make ends meet.

Child care assistance can be broken down into basically four categories — resource and referral, which is becoming more common; family-friendly policies, like those enjoyed by Mitchell; financial policies ranging from subsidies to pre-tax deductions; and on-site child care.

Joseph J. O'Connor, president of Consumer Market Analysis in Birmingham, said employers have long been under the misconception that the only way they can help parents with child care is to provide on-site day care.

"They think it's an all or nothing issue — it isn't," O'Connor said. There are many things that even small companies can do.

Consumer Market Analysis, which provides market analysis for private industry, employs eight workers, three of whom have money deducted from their weekly paychecks before taxes to pay for child care.

"We started it about three years ago and people have been very pleased," he said.

"IN THE SHORT-term, it seems like it's only a benefit for the employee," he said. "But in the long-term, it benefits everyone. The real benefit is it pays off in employee productivity."

"We (as company executives) can't continue to run businesses without being open to child care issues," O'Connor said. Next to parents, businesses are the most affected by employees having children.

Parents may have to start later because they have to drop children off, they may have to leave early to pick them up, take personal days when children are sick. If companies are unresponsive to these things, they aren't going to keep employees," he said.

Please turn to previous page

Restaurateur negotiates sale

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Word of a possible sale of the Charley's Restaurants, currently in bankruptcy, is premature.

Richard Sikorski, president of Charley's Restaurants Inc., said several parties have been talking — and yes — there is a plan that would clear the corporation of all debt, but there are several hurdles that must be overcome. Charley's Restaurants Inc. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November 1990.

Chuck Muer, principal owner of C.A. Muer Corp., said he couldn't discuss the particulars of the plan because any sale is contingent on the approval of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

In 1987, Muer sold seven Charley's

Restaurants in Bloomfield Township, Southfield, Livonia, Northville, Dearborn, Harper Woods and Toledo, plus Clamdiggers in Farmington Hills and Meriwether's in Southfield, to Charley's Restaurants Inc. in Farmington Hills.

"Everyone wants this to be wrapped up and done with, but we can't say that," Muer said. Anyone who has ever had dealings with bankruptcy courts knows that until all the papers are signed, a plan is still just talk," he added.

Muer said announcing plans prematurely serves no productive purpose but does cause anxiety for employees.

Paragon of Michigan, which owns and operates 12 Mountain Jacks in the state, announced last week that

it was buying four Charley's from Sikorski.

The remaining four Charley's, according to Paragon vice president of operations Daniel Nye, were reacquired by the C.A. Muer Corp. A fifth Charley's — Uptown Charley's in Madison Heights — was sold in 1989.

ANNOUNCEMENT of a sale is premature because the sales must be approved by both the U.S. Bankruptcy Court — which is responsible for all creditors being paid — and the Liquor Control Commission — which must approve the transfer of liquor licenses, Sikorski said.

"(All seven) Charley's will remain open until a decision is made," Sikorski said. If the sale is approved, Paragon

Please turn to previous page

Business leaders wrestle with child care questions

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Who's watching the children?

Sixty years ago, it was probably grandma.

Thirty years ago, it was probably mommy.

If it's a 90's kind of family, with mommies and daddies both working, it's probably some sort of day care arrangement.

Private sector day care providers have rushed to meet that increased need. But the problems presented by caring for the children of southeastern Michigan's work force have far outstripped the private sector's ability to cope with the demand for day care.

Robert A. Davis, Child Day Care Delivery project director for the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation, said business is going to have to be more involved in helping parents provide day care.

The Metropolitan Affairs Corporation is a coalition of business, labor and government leaders from Oakland, Wayne, and Macomb counties that analyzes regional problems, suggests options for public policy and stimulates civic action.

Changes in population and work force have created a dilemma for not only parents, but for business as well. Overall, there is a lack of information about what quality day care is, and a lack of clear guidelines for businesses seeking to offer assistance to parents with child day care problems, Davis said.

There is also a need to spell out the business benefits of child care.

"That's what we originally set out to do — convince the employers that child care does affect the bottom line," Davis said.

The benefits to business of child care are hard to quantify in dollars, Davis said, which is the first thing most decision makers want to know.

JUST BECAUSE they're difficult to quantify, however, doesn't mean there are no benefits.

'That's what we originally set out to do — convince the employers that child care does affect the bottom line.'

— Robert A. Davis

Ensuring that employees have adequate child care improves employee productivity and morale because child care concerns no longer interfere with the work day, Davis said.

Assisting in child care can also do wonders for a company's image. Companies that help parents find child care, or in some way assist in child care, are likely to develop a good image — and that image can help companies attract good quality workers.

There may not be an immediate gain for the business, but child care should be considered a long term goal, he said.

"We ought to be positioning ourselves for the future."

But even those businesses interested in providing child care have no idea where to begin, Davis said.

The Metropolitan Affairs Corporation's answer to this most basic question is to publish a handbook for providing child care, scheduled for release later this month.

More than a year in the making, the child care guide will be distributed to personnel and human resources managers.

Options on child care and accredited child care centers are only some of the information contained in the booklet, he said. More importantly, the guide will show business decision-makers why child care is important and how to go about starting some type of child care.

But providing day care and day

care information is only part of the problem. Davis said a scarcity of quality care staff will be a great problem in the next decade.

GAYLA HOUSER, Troy Chamber of Commerce president, said there is probably a great many more companies doing things that involve child care than the average person thinks.

In a 1990 survey of its members, Houser said child care was one of the top five concerns of business leaders.

Businesses have begun to realize that an ever increasing number of families include two working parents and unless they can find quality day care they will not be able to concentrate on jobs, she said.

Child care, Houser said, will become an important benefit in the future. "I think we're only seeing the beginning of a trend."

"It doesn't take a genius to figure out that with less workers (overall) and more females in the work force, that the competition for employees will (necessitate) offering child care as a benefit," she said.

Nor does Houser think child care will be a difficult sell for today's decision makers.

When woman first started entering the work force, the business leaders and decision makers were from the old school — men went to work, women stayed at home and took care of the children.

Today, woman are not only more interested in pursuing a career, but they are almost required to do so.

"Today, decision makers are fathers (in two-income families) or they're grandfather's who see the problems their children have raising children."

So the issue of child care is not as hard to get across as it might have been once. Houser added there is still the question of what businesses can do.

Large companies have the resources (to look at the issue), but the small to mid-size companies have a problem," she said. "Too many people think child care is an all (on-site child care) or nothing issue."

**PEAK
YOUR
INTEREST.
8.0%**

Now at Michigan National Bank, a 60 month Certificate of Deposit earns 8.0% annual simple interest on a minimum deposit of \$1,000.*

For more information and current rates, stop by

any Michigan National branch office or phone 1-800-CALL-MNB. You'll see we're doing what it takes.

*Subject to penalty for early withdrawal. Available for a limited time only. Excludes IRA (Roth and Traditional) and CD's over \$100,000.

**Michigan
National
Bank**

We're doing what it takes.

Meriden 124