## Volunteers: the lifeline of Family Services



This is the last in a series of articles on Oakland Family Services, the non-profit social service agency with five Oakland County locations now celebrating its 70th anniversary.

By Judith Doner Berne staff writer

SUZANNE DIETZ was done with scouting. Her children, 11 and 13, didn't need the care they once had. "I just wanted to start working with others — people outside my own cir-

others – people outside my own cir-cle."

So the Bloomfield Township resident took Oakland Family Services'
25 hours of volunteer training and chose to apply it to "Ready ... Let's Grow," — a program for chil-dren at risk in the area served by Birmineham schools

Let's Grow," — a program for children at risk in the area served by
Birmingham schools.

The overall goal of the project
boused at Pembroke Elementary is
to provide carly intervention service
to todders at risk for developmental
delay and to their families.

"It's not the dire poverty but
there's money and management
problems. People are in there for
parenting skills, because they
werent parented well."

both plan same challeren during
such two-hour group interaction
soin and "gear some time and enstem to be a such as the service of the
collimportant."

Eight parent/child pairs are involved for a 10-week period which
includes home visits. Transportation
and child care for siblings are provided.

"I've enloyed it. It's amazing to

"I've enjoyed it. It's amazing to

"I've enjoyed it. It's amazing to me as a former teacher, how when-you start really young how rapidly changes are made. "It was really fun after not having kids that age to get down and play. It brought out a lot of playfulness in me."

CONNIE DREW of Rochester Hills volunteers as a parent alde, trying to help a young mother get back a child taken away by the court because of neglect, physical or sexu-

back a child taken away by the court because of neglect, hybried or sexual a base.

Oakland Familly Services has a federal contract to help in these situations. They work with the child, the foster parent and the parent so that the child can be returned to a different home environment. "Through us, they have a chance to get their children returned," Drew said.

"She loves her children. She's just overwhelmed," says Drew, who makes a home wild at least once a week acting both as a role model and urtuer." Sometimes they we had no nurruture, sometimes they we had no nurruture, sometimes they been with her, I've seen such a change.

ment. In the five months I've been with her, I've seen such a change. That's the reward.

"She now does her hair. Her house is clean. She wears makeup."

The mother, who is pregnant with another child, has asked Drew to be the godmother.

Drew read about OFS volunteer opportunities on her church bulletin baard.

opportunities on the case of the board.

For her, "this is a growth experience. I had no idea from my pedestal in Rochester Hills. they have no phone, no car, It's intergenerational. They're trapped."

ELLY OTTERSEN of Rochester Hills gets to "take home all the job and energy of a new life" everytime she volunteers as an OFS birth com-

she volunteers as an OFS birth com-panion.

A birth companion is "a neutral support person for the couple," Ol-terson explains. "OFS started it. Otter agencies are modeling it." Otterson must walk a fine line be-tween helping the couple and not in-terfering in the birth experience. "The dats have a lot of tension— emotional and sometimes physical. It's real important not to invade the privacy of the couple."

Many of the people she helps are pregnant teenagers.

Many of the people she helps are pregnant teenagers. But, "anyone who lives or works in Oakland County can have this," Ottersen said. "If you're able to pay, there's a silding scale."

The youngest teenager she worked with was 15. "She saved up \$10 and sent if to the agency."

Ottersen has been part of the program for five years, starting out as a

Service - USDA "We give a hoot, so we won't pollute!" perinatal coach. "If they have a posi-tive experience at birth, it lays the foundation for a good first year," she

foundation for a good.

says.

Last year, she got to do a delivery by herself. "The doctor was busy with twins in the next room. I didn't have to do anything very actifitud."

"My first goal that I've accomplished is the privilege or being present at the miracle of birth. I'm in so many home videos, you wouldn't believe it."

five tutors who met with elementary-aged children when they arrived there from school for a three-hour seasion twice a week.
The one-on-one or one-on-two program continued in the summer one alternoon a week.
She primarily worked with a 7-year-old boy whose 8-year-old sister also came.
"They need supplemental educa-"They need supplemental educa-

also came.
"They need supplemental educa-tion. He didn't know the basics in reading. It was a really happy day when he was able to print his name

Stean and under their main enough as blorne."

Sloan came upon the opportunity to volunteer a year or so age through a blurb in her church newsletter. "I get satisfaction from the really illue things — a smile, the fact he can prick his name, that he does what I ask. They add up to a lot of joy."

For Sloan, the joys of tutoring and of building up a relationship with the boy have turned somewhat bittersweet. The program ended in August due to lack of funding. According to the rules, she can have no further contact. "My concern is what will happen to this child? He's such a

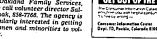
sweet little thing."
But she hopes to tutor through another program, because it's helping some more children. "I grew from the experience."
And she wants others to know:
"You don't have to be a teacher to do this — If you have the time and desire."

For volunteer opportunities with Oakland Family Services, please call volunteer director Sally Knack, 588-768. The agency is particularly interested in getting more men and minorities to volunteer.



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