

Community Corner

This week's question:
What do you think of the community effort throughout October to educate people about drug and alcohol abuse?

We asked this question inside the Farmington-Area YMCA in Farmington Hills.



"I wasn't even aware of it. But I agree. I think it's good they do it."
— Darl Norberg
Farmington Hills



"I think that it's fine. I'm against drugs."
— Leona Cotman
Farmington



"As far as drugs, I don't think anybody should use them. I think they should give out stiffer (court) sentences — that would help."
— Frank Keely
Commerce Township



"I think it's great. I do. We incorporate a lot of that into the programs here. These little kids know a lot more than we think."
— Robin Suggs
YMCA employee



"I think it's great. It makes people aware — it makes them more aware of everything going on around them."
— William Edelson
West Bloomfield



"Well, I think it's a good idea. I have two girls at Wooddale, and they're always bringing something home. Awareness is a lot better than children not knowing anything."
— Holly Brickhouse
Farmington Hills

Parent program postponed till '92

By Casey Hane
staff writer

An alcohol information program for parents has been postponed until next year, when it will be offered to parent groups at individual schools.

Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol, a program designed to help parents of pre-teen and teenage children talk about alcohol, was originally scheduled to begin next week and run through November in two sessions, but was canceled due to low registration, said Pat Newcombe, a Farmington Families in Action parent and one of three Farmington-area instructors trained to present the TWYKAA program.

Parents said they wanted the program to be brought to individual schools, so that's what FFIA is doing beginning early next year.

"Parents are looking for support from one another," explained Newcombe, a parent and one of three Farmington-area women trained to do the four-session seminar. "Parents are beginning to re-

alize it's easier to enforce other things — curfews, clothing allowances — when you have the support of your friends."

By doing the program in smaller, already established groups such as PTAs and PTOs, that parent support is already in place, she said.

CURRENTLY, TENTATIVE plans for TWYKAA programs include:

- A session in January or February at Gill Elementary where some 30 parents have showed an interest.

- A Sunday afternoon session beginning Feb. 23 and running for four weeks 1-3:30 p.m. at the Farmington Area YMCA.

- A Tuesday morning program at the Farmington Community School beginning on Jan. 21 and running for four consecutive Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Free baby-sitting will be provided.

- Tentative plans for a January session at Nardin Park Church.

- Possible plans for a combina-

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Local family's spirit crushed by alcohol

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Jim went through therapy, including Alcoholics Anonymous, but feels he can better work out his problems on his own. Jim says he is not an alcoholic.

His sister Mary, who appeared to be the stable member of the family, also drank heavily in high school, but now doesn't drink often.

But the family's alcohol problems have left their mark on Mary. She has trouble accepting any good in her life.

"Whenever something's too good, I'm always looking for the problem. You kind of make up problems," she said.

John, their father, stopped drinking 10 years ago. He chose not to be interviewed by the Observer. Their mother, Betty, had a drinking problem which lasted about two years and accompanied her divorce from John 11 years ago. Despite extramarital affairs on both sides, they remained married.

THE REALITIES of life hit the family hard. They recognize alcohol was not an escape from individual and family problems. They can laugh and cry. But the resentment, anger and distrust remain.

"I think I've seen a lot for how young I was," said Mary, adding that she had a lot of feelings during her childhood.

"A lot of the focus was on my brother. I felt I learned a lot of responsibility from the whole thing."

"When I was younger, I just let things pass. Now I deal with people."

Jim is still angry, but learning to cope. "I rebelled against the whole divorce and everything," he said. "I don't choose to rebel anymore. I choose to work it out."

Looking back, Betty said nobody realized there was an alcohol problem initially. "It just turned into a big mess," she said. "I didn't realize my husband was an alcoholic — my husband didn't drink every day. He worked all the time. Sometimes, he wouldn't come home."

Betty said therapy helped her through. "It made me a different person," she said. "This recovery group has been a lifesaver for me. I didn't know how to feel before."

Betty is the only family member who remains in therapy.

Jim said he got nothing out of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, because they dealt only with alcohol and not other problems he wanted to talk about. Mary said she went to therapy a few times, but doesn't feel she needs it.

John went to therapy but no longer participates, Betty said.

Despite the problems the family has endured, they disagree amongst themselves whether alcohol prob-



lems are hereditary or a product of their environment.

Betty traces the history of alcohol problems on both sides of the family, including her father and brother, and John's brothers and both parents. She believes heredity is key and that the environment contributes.

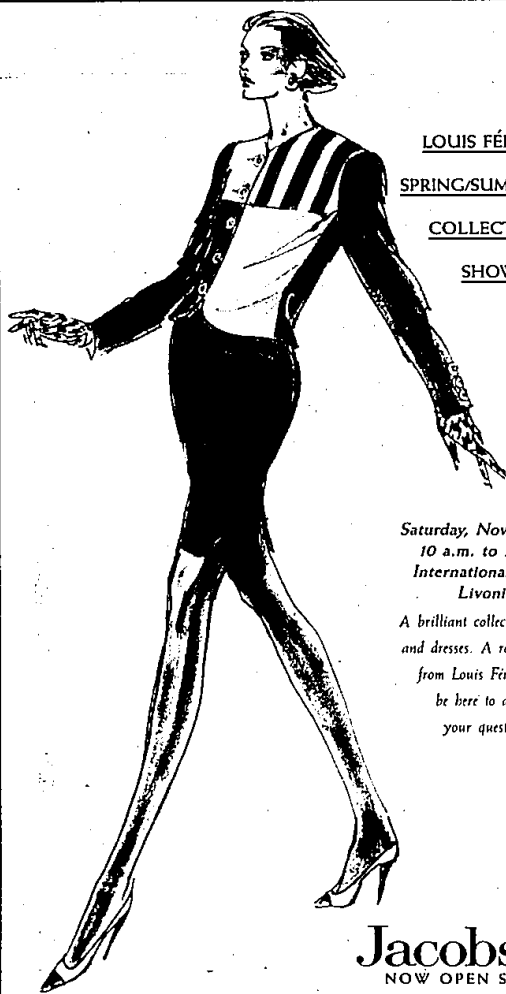
"When you live in it, it just becomes part of life," Betty said.

JIM BELIEVES alcohol problems are strictly a product of environment. He hung around with kids who drank heavily, so he did too. As the

only son in the family, other family members, he felt, held an expectation that he could follow the same path.

The moment he began to drink as a teenager, he said his family labeled him as an alcoholic. "I was next in line," he said. "It was more like the pressure was on me."

All the family members believe the emphasis during October's Substance Abuse Awareness Month is good, and that it needs to continue through the year.



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