

Speaker urges parents to take PRIDE in values

By AILEEN WINGBLAD
STAFF WRITER

Bill Oliver, founder of the Atlanta-based PRIDE group, emphasized the need for strong family values and parental involvement in the keynote address for the 1994 Farmington Families in Action Substance Abuse kickoff breakfast Friday at Glen Oaks Golf Club in Farmington Hills.

Speaking before a crowd of 300, Oliver drove home the theme — the family — by stressing the importance of a healthy belief system within the family and calling for parents to become aware of what is going on in their kids' lives to help steer young people away from drug and alcohol use.

"The issue is what our children believe, not what they know. It is not knowledge that determines one's behavior, it's one's own beliefs," Oliver said.

If parents can reach youngsters

struggling with their belief systems at a "gut" level, there is a better chance to impact them in a positive way, Oliver said.

It starts at home

Oliver criticized the current approach of dealing with substance abuse, which he said often relies too much on the education system or law enforcement, as ineffective.

What is needed instead is a coordinated effort that generates a home and family life, using the schools and law enforcement services as resources, he said.

"It's not the school's responsibility to raise children," he said. "It's not the police's responsibility to raise children. It's not the church's responsibility to raise children. It is mom and dad's responsibility."

"Ordinary people are the people who are going to have an impact on these kids. Ordinary mamas,

ordinary daddies raising ordinary kids. What's going to work is ordinary people raising ordinary kids in wonderful communities like Farmington Hills," he said.

Oliver praised Farmington Hills as a city with demonstrated concern for its young people and expressed optimism for a successful campaign against substance abuse within the community.

Get parents involved

Yet it's vital that more and more people become part of this effort, he said.

"I challenge you, I dare you, I implore you to get more moms and dads involved. You have to get them excited, and then you can get them involved," he said.

The audience was made up of local community officials, business leaders, representatives from local organizations, teachers and parents.

"His speech was thought-provoking in trying to get us to look at the problem from a different perspective than we do now," said Mary Ellen Thompson, a teacher at East Middle School, Farmington Hills.

"And I think we all need to work together — parents, the schools and the community. Too often, the schools are blamed for all the problems. What (Oliver) is saying is that this is a community problem yet it's something parents really need to address," she added.

Mayor Pro Tem Joanne McShane, who also sits on the FFIA board, agreed that this is an issue needing attention and said that the people of Farmington and Farmington Hills can be counted on to deal with it.

A caring community

"This is indeed a caring community, there's no doubt about it.

People here want to do what is right for the community. Though I wish somehow we could take this message to others, to other communities. We need to show people that it's all about those who care."

Some folks who turned out for the speech, however, said the subjects of substance abuse and strong family values are complex issues, affected by many factors that weren't introduced.

"I think he missed an important point," said Lloyd Smith, Farmington High School debate coach. "Lots of kids come from one-parent families and these families aren't solidly together. The kids have a tremendous sense of insecurity. So let's do something with the parents, too," said Smith, adding that an unfortunate message many kids are getting nowadays, from TV and elsewhere, is that "if you can get

away with it, it's all right."

Added Southfield resident and Kiwanis Club member Phyllis Liedtke: "(Oliver) really brings this issue to heart. The more people become interested in the more involved they will be. If we never think about or talk about these things, we'll never get involved and be able to do anything to change them for the better."

FFIA Chairman Betty Nicolay said she was quite pleased with the turnout and expected Oliver's message to be carried throughout the community.

"He certainly gave us a challenge, to get more parents to accept their responsibilities. But it is because of people like Bill Oliver and all those who came in support today that FFIA is so successful and why we're now in our 11th year. It's great to see so many people who care."

Woman writes book on peer pressure

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When it comes to peer pressure, writing no is never easy. Otherwise Sharon Scott wouldn't have been able to write seven books on the subject.

A two-letter word wouldn't fill many pages.

Scott's books specialize in giving parents and children alike advice on how to deflect the need to go with the flow of the in-crowd.

The Dallas-based guidance counselor will speak 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 13, in the East Middle School cafeteria, 23000 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills. Admission is free, but the program is only open to parents.

Scott's visit is sponsored by Farmington Families in Action as part of its ongoing alcohol and drug awareness month.

Peer pressure is often at the core of early drug and alcohol use, experts say. But can also sway kids to copy homework, gossip about others and fight, Scott said.

"Peer pressure is very subtle," Scott said. "Kids think peer pressure is, 'If you don't do this, I'm going to beat you up.'"

"Peer pressure is more like, 'Come on, everybody is doing this... it's fun.'"

Scott has seen where peer pressure can lead kids. She was the director of the Dallas Department's First Offender Program.



Sharon Scott

A lot of children didn't fit the juvenile delinquent profile, Scott said. Some were model students and even involved in Scouts. They were usually before her on a burglary or a drug charge, often prompted by a dare from others.

"They didn't know how to say, 'no,'" she said. "They didn't know how to handle their friends when the heat is on."

Children find themselves in a dilemma: Either be teased and deemed a nerd, or go along with their friends and get into trouble.

There's a skill in how to say no but "still save face," Scott said.

Some of her tips for teens in

See BOOKS, 19A

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