

THURSDAY, MAY 25, 1995

COMMUNITY LIFE

Center's work all in the family

Family Centers of America Inc., with a newly opened office in Farmington Hills, aims to help families in crisis.

BY BETT SUNDILA JACIMAN
STAFF WRITER

When there's a crisis in a marriage, people often turn to an attorney. A new center in Farmington Hills has a different approach — mediation.

Family Centers of America Inc., 30220 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, uses the slogan "Giving you alternatives for handling conflict."

Executive administrator and founder Marilyn Fessler sees the center, which opened in early April, as offering options that have been lacking in dealing with family problems. A group of professionals from various fields, including law, counseling, social work, real estate, insurance and finance, nutrition and family therapy has joined to provide services for the center.

The center will work with families in all dimensions of challenges, Fessler said.

"Families are in deep trouble. A lot of us recognize that," she said. People also need a place they can come to do the work of problem-solving, she said.

People have been brainwashed to turn to someone else to solve problems, Fessler said. As children, that means principals and teachers. As adults, that means therapists and medical professionals. People also turn to courts.

But, Fessler said, people need to start owning their lives and taking control of them. People flock to the



Room to talk: Mediator Laura Athens, an attorney and social worker, breaks down expenses for John and Cathy, a couple seeking a divorce at Family Centers of America Inc. in Farmington Hills.

self-help industry, she points out. But people are still in a teaching stage; they have trouble flipping to the action stage, rolling up their sleeves and doing the work of problem solving, she said.

Fessler, a West Bloomfield resident, says her parents instilled strong family values in her. She in turn wants the center to strengthen

and empower families by providing help.

She sees that people have trouble finding help when they need it. She gave an example of someone with a problem child, trying to find help. That person can call around, be given a list of referrals, but never find help. It's a massive referral system, almost like being stuck in

Voicemail, she said.

The idea at the family center is for people to have a neutral place to meet and talk with a mediator. The mediator helps clearly identify the problem, prioritize and identify options, she said.

Mediators help people define the

See CENTER, 19A



DIANE K. McQUISTON

Student rights causing wrongs

I am a very angry parent who is becoming very tired of what is going on in our schools. I am just becoming more frustrated by the fights, arguments, thefts and just the general attitude of the students toward the faculty, with very little being done.

On May 9, my son came home at lunchtime and told me that someone had broken into his car while he was in school. He is a junior at Harrison High School.

His car and another girl's car were broken into, and it seems that the security people didn't notice. Here it was a rainy day and there were no outside activities because of the weather, and two cars were broken into. And the security guards, who were supposed to check the parking lot on a routine basis, didn't even notice that my son's window was broken and that there was glass scattered all over that area. His car stereo and portable CD player were taken, along with some CDs.

When is all this going to stop? Why are the students gaining control over the schools and faculty? Why are the teachers becoming so intimidated by the students because of the "rights" they have? You can't touch them, you can't fail them, you can't expel them, you just can't do anything. Where are the parents of these students who won't behave, who won't learn, who won't have respect for the faculty and other students?

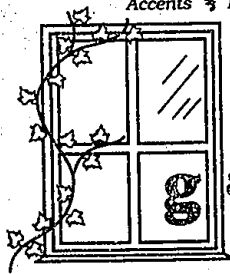
Why are these students allowed to stay in school? Are the parents just too busy with their own lives to be bothered? Do they just not care what their children are doing? Do they want someone else to be responsible for their child's actions?

See RIGHTS, 19A

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