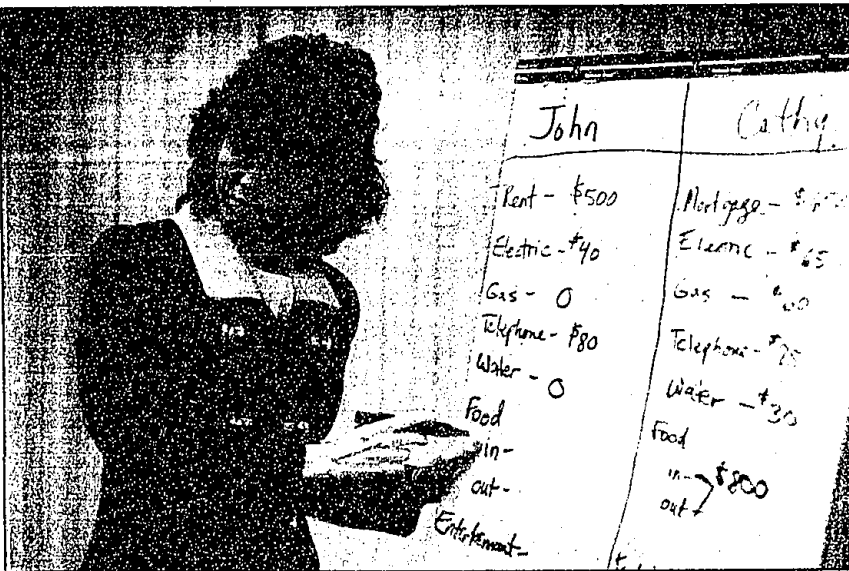




By the numbers: Laura Athens, a mediator, writes out expenses for John and Cathy at Family Centers of America Inc. in Farmington Hills.

Center from page 13A

issues, Fessler said. The wife may be concerned about the way her husband speaks to her or the way he acts toward her friends, but not be able to identify the real issues.

When they work through the process themselves, they have a better understanding, Fessler said.

Often, in a courtroom setting, decisions are made by the judge. When a problem is mediated, people are involved in the decisions.

"When people own their own decisions, they are more likely to let go, put it to bed and move on," Fessler said.

Divorce is the major focus of

the center, and Fessler says there's a major need in that area.

A divorce means there must be a judgment that meets certain requirements by law, but the process and work of getting a settlement doesn't have to be done in court, she said.

Fessler sees an important issue in people being forced to accept imposed decisions in court. Often, the people involved never get to speak and the judge decides for them.

That leads to unhappiness and "a lot of extra baggage," Fessler said.

The key to private mediation is that it's private and confidential.

"It's humiliating to air your personal problems in court," she said.

Laws don't deal with relationship problems, she said. "They don't really deal with emotions, family dynamics."

Some lawyers fear mediation will take money out of their pocketbooks, Fessler said. But she sees the center working with lawyers. Mediation could streamline lawyers' caseloads, if they let people who are skilled and trained in family dynamics do the work, she said.

It's been well-received by some attorneys. "We're not replacing the need for the skill of an attorney. But we can more effectively deal with emotions," she said.

In the mediation system, couples can bring in their children for an orientation session. Kids are not engaged in the nitty-gritty of a divorce, but "children need information. It helps them reduce their anxiety and fears," she said.

The time required to have a divorce mediated depends on the people involved. If there is a laundry list of problems, it could take a while. The average is 10-12 sessions.

Family Centers will work with people so they can afford the services, Fessler said.

Family Centers of America Inc. is at 30230 Orchard Lake Road, Suite 100, Farmington Hills. (810) 855-3020.



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Rights from page 13A

I'm just so angry that this happened, not just because it was my son's car, but that it can happen during school hours, in a protected car lot that is not that large.

These students have no recourse but to accept it as a matter of fact. I have such fear that a student will wind up getting hurt critically. Why are the students allowed to stay in school when they cause problems? When are the students going to start to respect their teachers? Why are the students allowed to eat in class? To drink beverages in class? To just leave a class? To have beepers? And to have the right to talk back the way they do?

I just can't help but feel that there are other parents that feel the way I do. That are tired of having their children's watches, wallets and other items stolen from their gym locker, cars keyed or broken into, their children pushed around, harassed and just

made to feel afraid. This should not be allowed. But what are we as parents to do? How many excuses are we supposed to accept as to why this happens and that we should understand?

I've written to Dr. C. Robert Maxfield, the superintendent of schools for Farmington. I feel that this is something that more parents should do. To let him know that we don't want to put up with this, to accept it as a way of being, to be a part of what our children have to put up with because there are these types of students who feel they can bully these other students around. Something has to be done soon so that the students who want to learn, be involved and be proud of their school have that opportunity again.

Diane K. McQuiston is a resident of Farmington Hills.

6th-grader honored for artwork

Emily Baker, a sixth-grader at Power Middle School and daughter of Mike and Kathy Baker of Farmington Hills, was recently honored by the Michigan Youth Arts Festival for her pastel drawing of green peppers.

Her work was selected for exhibition at the 1995 festival, held on the

campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, May 11-13.

Baker's teacher Gail Piepenburg of Power Middle School submitted her work to the festival committee.

The annual festival showcases student dance, theater, instrumental and vocal music, visual arts, film/video, and creative writing.

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