

## COMMUNITY LIFE

## Budget cuts silence hearing impaired programs



State budget reductions have cut into programs for hearing impaired people with mental, emotional or developmental problems.

By DIANE HANSON  
SPECIAL WRITER

Earlier this year, the last group home in the state of Michigan, established for hearing impaired children and young adults with mental health, emotional or developmental problems, closed its doors.

There were, formerly, three residential treatment centers located in Flint for hearing impaired individuals with mental health problems; one for adults and two for young people.

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James Haring  
service coordinator for Michigan Youth and Family Development, Inc.

All three are now closed along with an in-patient program for hearing impaired children at Hawthorne Center in Northville and another one for adults at Northville Regional Psychiatric Hospital.

"There has been a general shift in public policy with regard to how children are cared for under the auspices of community mental health," said James Haring, service coordinator for Michigan Youth and Family Development, Inc., a state agency based in Farmington Hills.

The general trend, according to Haring, has been to shift treatment for mental health in general from

the responsibility of the state to that of the individual communities.

"The problem is that if the treatment of choice across the state is that children and adults should be treated in their home communities, that is fine and dandy for most hearing people," according to Susan Rogin, public affairs coordinator for Michigan Youth and Family Development.

"For deaf adults and for deaf kids, the effect of this is, in many cases, there is no appropriate treatment," she said. "There are no professionals who have experience with deafness. Adults are being placed, in some places, in hearing settings with hearing residents and with hearing staff with whom they cannot communicate."

According to Rogin, since the percentage of hearing impaired individuals dealing with mental or emotional difficulties is such a small percentage of the population, it

contact with deaf staff who could be roll models for them. They have no contact with professionals who understand what it means to be deaf. And most sign language interpreters don't have a background in mental health interpreting.

Haring pointed out that there are some communities in Michigan that provide excellent services for the deaf. The problem, he explained, is that they are few in number and not available to individuals in other communities since the state defines a community by geographic location.

"The way I like to look at this is that the first things that define community are a common language, common set of traditions, common set of values," Haring explained. "One of the last things that defines 'community' is geographic boundaries."

"For the deaf person, community is defined by cultural linguistic parameters, not geographic parameters," he said.

For most deaf individuals, American Sign Language (ASL) is the communication of choice and, according to Haring, most deaf people are unable to read lips.

A directory of mental health services for the deaf was recently compiled through a combined effort of the Mental Health Advisory Council on Deafness (established by the governor) and the State Department of Mental Health.

According to Haring, while some of the clinics may provide some services, most are unable to provide full services for adults and children, including psychological testing and residential care when needed.

While willing to look at different ways of doing things, Haring is concerned with those responsible for policy-making decisions and would like a full range of mental health services available and designed for the hearing impaired.

"The bottom line is that hearing people are making decisions about what is best for deaf people with no knowledge of what they are talking about," he said. "What we're really,



James Haring/Staff Writer

really concerned about is that deaf kids get placed in situations designed by and for hearing individuals. That does not constitute good treatment."

Rogin said: "Because it's very hard for very healthy and educated deaf persons to be heard in the hearing world, how is a person who has a mental illness, who is deaf, going to be heard? Who is going to speak for that person?"

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NAN REID

## Area welcomes arts council

The arts and cultural organizations of Farmington and Farmington Hills are happy to announce the birth of the Farmington Community Arts Council.

A fairly weighty group, the Farmington Community Arts Council boasts 20 parent organizations representing more than 1,000 area resident members.

They include Embroiderer's Guild; Farmington Arts Commission; Farmington Community Band; Farmington Crazy Quilters; Farmington Hills Historical Commission; Farmington Hills Special Services; Farmington Musicals; Longacre House; North Farmington Garden Club; and Parks and Recreation Commission.

Other groups in the council are the Farmington Artists Club; Farmington Area Philharmonic; Farmington Community Chorus; Farmington Garden Club; Farmington Historical Society; Hill and Dale Garden Club; National Farm and Garden Club; Oakland Community College; Ridgewriters and Sweet Adeline Chorus.

The group's goals and objectives are to:

- create a volunteer organization to provide a unified voice for the Arts and Cultural interests of Farmington and Farmington Hills;
- establish policies and procedures necessary to support the successful operation of the non-profit volunteer organization;
- develop a system to provide operational funds for this volunteer organization;
- create a group of dedicated fundraisers for long-range goals;
- develop an annual funding program;
- create a collective voice to communicate and

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