

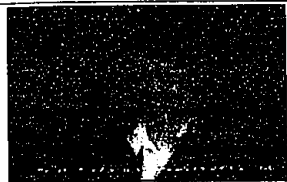
COMMUNITY LIFE

Page 11A

DIANE GALE, EDITOR
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Encounters of the angelic kind



KAREN HERMES SMITH

Kids' imaginary play can become . . . unbearable

You have probably heard the story about the velvet rabbit, a stuffed toy bunny who came to life after its owner, a little boy, fell ill.

At our house, we have a stuffed brown bear made of matted-down fake fur who comes to life every day for its owner, my 9-year-old daughter, Katelyn.

Perhaps it is because "Katie," which Katelyn calls her bear, looks so real that Katelyn thinks of her as real. Unlike most teddy bears that are made in a seated position, Katie is shaped like a real bear cub crawling on all four.

In fact, the manufacturer made her look so life-like that once, when she was new and the mat on her fur still stood up, a naturalist at the Independence Oaks nature center saw Katelyn emerging with Katie from a wooded trail and thought for a moment that Katelyn was carrying a real bear cub.

Or, perhaps it was the way I made Katie "talk" to Katelyn after she pulled her out of the box on her fifth birthday that made her seem so real. "Do it again, Mom," Katelyn would beg me. "Make Katie talk to me again."

Whatever it was, Katelyn loved Katie from the moment she saw her, more so than any other bear she has owned before or since then.

Like a doting mom, Katelyn wraps Katie in blankets, feeds her with a play bottle, strolls her around in a stroller. She comforts Katie when

See HERMES SMITH, 15A

There is no doubt in the mind of local psychologist Tom Bruno, there are "Angels Among Us." And he tells of numerous encounters from those who have had experiences with angels.

By MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

Angels, whether in the form of smiling cherubic figurines, little gold jewelry, or filling entire sections of local bookstores, seem to be everywhere today. But they're not a passing fad, insists local psychologist Tom Bruno.

Bruno, who has made the study of angels a vocation since the 1950s, addressed a crowd at the Farmington Hills Senior Center recently on the topic "Angels Among Us."

Bruno studied angels privately for years until he had a dream about an angel one night. He understood from the dream that he would somehow be working with angels.

"I had done seminars on domestic violence, relationships, and other topics. My wife gave me the idea to do a seminar on angels. I'm used to 12 people showing up for a seminar. The first angel seminar drew 120 people."

Spurred on by the initial enthusiasm, he ran a newspaper ad soliciting testimonials from people who believe they have had an encounter with an angel.

"There is almost an epidemic of angel encounters," said Bruno, who once studied theology in a Roman Catholic seminary.

His talk was peppered with testimonials, including one related to



SHARON LEMLEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Angel talk: Tom Bruno talks to senior citizens at the Farmington Hills Activities Center in Farmington Hills recently about the existence of angels.

him by former channel 7 weather-caster Rob Kress.

"His daughter was having an operation. On his way back from getting coffee, he encountered a custodian in a hospital corridor who addressed him by name," said Bruno.

"That wasn't surprising because of his local celebrity. But the man, who said his name was Sylvester, told him his daughter was going to

recover quickly and would be sent home the following day."

The following day, much to the medical staff's surprise, the child had recovered enough to be discharged. And no one on staff, neither doctors nor nurses or other workers, had heard of the phantom custodian named Sylvester.

In another vignette, a 3-year-old girl surprised her mother by identifying a picture of an angel in a

book. "How do you know what an angel is?" the mother asked. "Remember when I was a baby and I was so sick, mommy? The angels were singing to me," Bruno said.

Because angels in their true essence would be "awesome, dazzling and powerful," according to Bruno, "angels usually appear to us

See ANGELS, 13A

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