

OAKLAND JOURNAL

Oakland Journal is a roundup of Oakland County news and notes collected from government, school, civic, community and neighborhood sources. Please write: Oakland Journal, c/o Oakland County editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

OAKLAND NOW

Oakland NOW will meet at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 10 at the Birmingham Unitarian Universalist Church, northwest corner of Woodward and Lone Pine roads. Making a presentation will be state Representative Pam Godchaux, D-Birmingham.

HEART TO HEART

The Oakland County Animal Care Center will be celebrating Valentine's Day this year by attempting to find loving homes for loving pets. An open house will be held at the center, 1700 Brown Road in Auburn Hills, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14. More than 100 homeless dogs and cats will be available for adoption. Theme for the day is: "Two hearts are better than one." For further information, call (248) 391-4100.

KEEPER OF THE DREAM

Oakland University's Keeper of the Dream Banquet, culminating OU's observance of African-American Celebration Month, is set for 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, in the Shetwell-Gustafson Pavilion. Robert J. Easton, chairman of Chrysler Corporation, will deliver the keynote address. Tickets are \$75 per person, of which \$35 is tax deductible. For ticket information, call Larven Harrington at (248) 370-4665 or Betty Green at (248) 370-4404.

COMPANIONSHIP VOLUNTEERS

The Alzheimer's Association is seeking volunteers to provide companionship to persons experiencing memory loss. Those who volunteer receive an excellent orientation that provides them with the information and skills to brighten the life of someone with Alzheimer's. The next orientation is from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21.

learn more about volunteering, please call Jeri Williams at (248) 557-8277.

MASTER COMPOSTER CLASS

Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority is offering a master composter class, beginning from 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 25, at the Royal Oak Senior Center. Topics covered include backyard composting, natural mulches, healthy lawn care, environmental gardening and education outreach to the public. There is a fee. For program information, contact SOCCRA weekdays at (248) 546-5818.

NURSES SOUGHT

The Oakland University School of Nursing in Rochester has launched its annual search for outstanding Michigan registered nurses to receive its 1993 Nightingale awards — a commemorative Nightingale bronze statuette and \$1,000. Nomination forms may be obtained by calling the School of Nursing at (248) 370-4501. Forms must be returned by Feb. 20. Nomination categories are sought in the following categories: nursing administration, nursing research, nursing education, nursing practice, long term care practice and home care. Winner, runners-up and nominees will be honored at the 10th annual Nightingale recognition dinner, May 7 at the Troy Marriott Hotel.

POSTERS ABOUT WOMEN

The Diversity Committee of Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus will host a poster exhibit in honor of African-American History Month, through Feb. 20. Entitled "Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds," the exhibit consists of posters on loan from the Michigan American Association of University Women. It will be located in the campus' J Building, sub-plaza level (first floor). Hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. Admission is free and open to the public. The campus is located at 27055 Orchard Lake Road, just south of I-696 in Farmington Hills. For more information, call the Womencenter at (248) 471-7602.

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voice. The latter discussion ends on the topic of drug testing.

"I think this is a really good program. I feel very fortunate to have gotten in here," says David, 39.

With 10 days left in the program, an 8 a.m. construction job to report to each day and hundreds of dollars in savings, David is feeling optimistic, he says.

"We have high hopes for David," Melville will say later, after all the shelter's clients have left for Nativity Episcopal Church in Bloomfield Township, the church designated to house, feed and provide transportation for all of SOS' current clients this week.

The following week, First United Methodist in Royal Oak will take over. In all, about 60 faith organizations in south Oakland County participate — acting as a county shelter for one week — each year.

David, who has always held down a job and was renting a two-bedroom house in Hamtramck before a string of bad luck toppled his life, is both an example of the program's effectiveness and a person who shatters our stereotypes about homelessness.

David's plunge from a middle class worker to a penniless man on the street is partly explained by the fact that, as a subcontractor, he wasn't entitled to work-er's compensation after a job site accident pulled him off the job.

But David also takes some of the blame, saying, "Actually, for me, this has been a good experience because I've learned to grow up."

But gratitude and responsibility come slowly here.

"At first, I felt worthless — the street geek type — and I was kind of standoffish."

Like most who come to SOS, David initially loathed the program's requirements. And since an array of hard knocks seem to go hand-in-hand with homelessness, clients often find additional limitations frustrating.

"In a way I feel like I should have just stayed at home because I didn't know it was this hard," says Nicole Miller, a 28-year-old mother of two from Detroit who became homeless after leaving her abusive boyfriend and their home.

Relatively new to the program, Miller, who is cradling her 1-year-

old son as she waits for a ride to Nativity Episcopal, vacillates from feeling proud — for ending the cycle of violence she has known since childhood — to despair.

"I don't have hope. This isn't hope. This is terrible," she says, complaining about the program's restrictions. "They make you feel like a child."

But Miller, who isn't sure about her future plans and is considering placing her two children with the state so she can get a job, praises the program only a few minutes later. "I

guess it helps you to be strong — to help us get on our feet."

With the arrival of drivers for Miller and other clients, the nightly cycle of activity at the SOS office starts to slow. The security guard leaves for the night. The office staff shuffles through paperwork.

David reflects: "There are things I took for granted that I will never again — people, places and things. Homelessness opened my eyes. It's opened my eyes to — what's that song? — it's opened my eyes to a whole new way."



Dinner time: South Oakland Shelter volunteers for a week Ruth Ilmer, Mandy Alexander, Jennifer Adams and Commie Ilmer, of Farmington Hills, serve dinner to shelter clients.

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