

CHAT ROOM



Elizabeth Smith & Dad

Preemie baby seminar aims to help parents

I know from experience that becoming the parent of a very premature baby is a far cry from the romantic view of parenthood that most people have in their pre-baby years.

I know it. So do all other preemie parents, including those who will attend Saturday's first annual "Empowering Parents of Premature Infants: A Conference for Parents and Professionals" at the Cobo Conference/Exhibition Center in Detroit.

The conference, co-organized by Birmingham-based The Alexis Foundation for Premature Infants and Children and the Premie-L Internet forum, will help parents discover what resources are out there to help them during and after the experience of watching their preemie baby fight for life in hospital neonatal intensive care units. (There remains space for those who want to attend the 9 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. conference; The cost is \$50 per parent.)

"Parents of premies are everywhere," said Elaine Sayers, a Birmingham resident who founded The Alexis Foundation after the death of her preemie daughter, Alexis.

And, parents everywhere need whatever information and advice they

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Today's YMCA gets with the program

■ A Farmington Hills businessman is at the helm as the metro Detroit YMCA prepares to stay vital into the new millennium.

As in his professional life as president and CEO of Barton Malow, Ben Maibach III, chairman of the board of the YMCA of Metro Detroit, has a master plan for that organization, but he's keeping the particulars under wraps.

"I do have ideas, but I'm using discretion putting together a strategic plan," said Maibach during an interview in his Southfield office in the American Center Building.

Barton Malow, one of the biggest construction contractors in the country, generated \$750 million worth of business in more than 20 states last year. Its imprint locally is everywhere from the Joe Louis Arena in downtown Detroit to Royal Oak's William Beaumont Hospital.

One gets the impression that big things are also in store for the metro YMCA during Maibach's tenure as board chairman, a two-year commitment he assumed last April.

"Strong kids, strong families, and strong communities. That's the motto of the YMCA," said Maibach, a Redford native and 20-year resident of Farmington Hills.

A member of the YMCA Board of Trustees for 15 years and various executive committees the last half dozen years, Maibach has been a YMCA member for the past quarter century.

He still plays racquetball weekly at the Farmington YMCA, often with



Kevin Bush, executive director of the branch on Farmington Road north of 12 Mile. And Maibach likes the Wellness Center there.

"When I first got on the board, I got insight on what was going on at that time. The 'Y' is 145 years old nationally, and always has been fairly strong in

Kevin Bush, executive director of the Farmington YMCA, diplomatically says "we're about even," when asked who dominates on the racquetball court, he or Ben Maibach III, chairman of the board of the Metro Detroit YMCA.

The two square off regularly in the

Detroit. In the past few years, a lot of positive things have happened.

"Many people still equate the 'Y' to swimming and athletics. It's so much more now. Our programs have expanded for youth, teens, and in the daycare area. It's really a community driven organization."

Farmington 'Y' branch on Farmington Rd. north of Twelve Mile. "We're both trying to shed a few pounds and get that bounce back," Bush says. (Maibach) competes to do a good job.

"He's an individual I respect because of his commitment to volunteer work

The Metro Detroit YMCA is growing. This past year, two independent operations, the North Oakland (Rochester) and the Mt. Clemens branches, joined the metro group.

"Independents don't have the

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with the 'Y' and other groups. And he is a gentleman, a person who leads his life according to the core values of the 'Y' - caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. We're pleased to have him."

Bush has been with the YMCA for

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Farmington Y branches out in the community

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