

## CHAT ROOM



TINA SHEMAOOR

## Support group helps anxiety sufferers

Linda Boethe (not her real name) was born in 1965. When she was in the eighth grade, Linda started to have an obsession with Satan because she was ill. By the end of eighth grade, she took off in a different direction, totally committed to God. At the time, she didn't know she had a thought disorder.

In 1986, Linda had a psychotic episode and was hospitalized. She was put on anti-psychotic medicine. Things improved. Next she was scared of nuclear war. Then she reached another plateau and felt good. When a psychiatrist took her off medication, Linda slowly declined. She started to daydream again and the dreams became more and more real.

She was hospitalized again in 1989. After she was discharged, she went to a day hospital. More doctors and therapists followed. Various medications were prescribed with different degrees of success.

Finally in March 1997, Linda found Anxiety Disorders Anonymous, a support group run by Irwin Goodman of Farmington Hills. The group meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Ada Center for Anxiety and Mood Disorders, 6256 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield.

Some of the people it helps are those suffering with panic attacks,

Please See CHAT ROOM, B2

## Chorus, crowd celebrate Melissa's return

Last August they held candles and prayed for her recovery. Last week Melissa Garr said thanks to the Farmington Community Chorus and supporters.

This time, nobody held lit candles. But Melissa Garr's presence was enough to light up Heritage Park last Thursday evening.

During the annual Farmington Community Chorus concert at the outdoor site, Melissa jubilantly sat at the piano next to her mother, Susan Garr, and turned pages for the accompanist.

About 250 members of Melissa's new, unofficial "extended family" sat on porch chairs or on the hill in front of the stage. Those Farmington and Farmington Hills community members enjoyed an hour-long concert and soaked up the splendor of seeing one of the area's favorite daughters - who lay in a coma the last time the chorus played Heritage Park, in August 1997.

After several songs, the markedly different circumstances surrounding the two concerts couldn't help but be noted by chorus director Steve SeGraves.

"This is an extremely important night because, a year ago, when I stood here talking to you during (that) concert, one of the things I said to you was 'Melissa Garr is still in her coma,'" SeGraves said. "And there wasn't much hope at the time. It was hard on everybody, especially the family."

"But we feel we're part of the family and as soon as she's old enough she's going to be a member of the Farmington Community Chorus."

### Thanks

Melissa and Susan then came up to the microphone and exchanged hugs with SeGraves amid a bouquet of pink roses that was presented to the teen.

"As you can see," SeGraves continued, "Melissa is no longer in a coma."

Loud, long applause followed, and then Melissa herself made some comments to the crowd.

"I want to thank the chorus for everything they've done and (thank



Page turner: With mom Susan Garr playing piano accompaniment for the chorus, a happy Melissa Garr turns the pages during a concert in Heritage Park last Thursday.

everyone for donating blood and who prayed for me," she said. "It sure helps. Thanks."

Fittingly, for such a joyous, grateful occasion, a gospel song was next on the playlist.

Of course, seeing and hearing from Melissa was only one reason people

were there. Music - everything from Sinatra to Gershwin to Disney - shared the bill with Melissa, who wore a purple-and-white Farmington Community Chorus uniform and a lasting smile.

The only person who might have been wearing an even bigger smile was

Susan Garr, who like many others at Heritage Park recalled the atmosphere of the 1997 performance. That time, more than 500 Farmington High schoolmates and community members were there, many holding up candles as they prayed for Melissa's recovery.

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