

CHAT ROOM



Eleanor Blum

Schools' priority must be to resolve conflicts

Recently, we have read in our local papers about a 6-year-old first-grader who brought a steak knife to school. His mother said it was to cut an orange for lunch — only no orange was found in the student's lunch. The student was suspended and will receive lessons at home until a hearing can be held. What can be done to protect our youngsters while in school? School needs to be a safe place for learning and growing in knowledge. What steps need to be taken to keep it that way?

Make schools safe

Last April, then-Rep. Sharon Gire and currently a new member of our State Board of Education, proposed legislation to make our schools safe. She stated, "Public education doesn't work if violence prevents teachers from teaching and students from learning. Many school districts have made progress in developing safe school initiatives, but more must be done. Our goal is for every school in Michigan to be the safest school in Michigan. Every school must make zero tolerance for drugs, gangs and violence part of its overall mission."

Dr. C. Robert Maxfield, superintendent of schools in Farmington, believes we need to be proactive in educating students relating conflict resolution. Farmington Schools have a student assistance team in every building as well as teachers and counselors trained, if there are problems. Each building has a peer mediator coordinator. Maxfield says "money invested in peer mediation is money well-spent. A high priority for Farmington Schools is conflict resolution."

Have peace pie

Eagle Elementary, as an example, teaches all children beginning in kindergarten to deal with difficulties related to their classmates and others. All students become educated in the "Peace Pie." It is comprised of eight pieces. They are: take turns; take a chance; get help; ignore; share; compromise; stop and think; and apologize.

Middle schools and high schools in Farmington offer to both students and teachers a more sophisticated level of training.

Farmington Hills Youth Foundation for Children, Youth and Families provides much-needed support in our community. They operate four teen centers for middle school students from 11 to 14 years of age after school. There is much cooperation and coalition building within the community to provide an atmosphere conducive to quality learning and a connection to adults.

William Glasser, a Los Angeles psychiatrist, spoke last spring to 1,000 Oakland County teachers who paid \$50 each to hear him on a Saturday morning. His message was that connecting emotionally with students is far more important than transmitting any particular body of knowledge. I am not certain that I am in full agreement on that, but I do believe an education need to have good lines of communication and trust with our youngsters, in order to maintain a safe learning environment in school.

I see Farmington Schools as working hard at achieving this most worthy goal.

Eleanor Blum is a Farmington Hills resident and a schoolteacher in Detroit.

Tax help available

Senior citizens who need help filling out their income tax forms can get free assistance on Tuesdays through April 15 at the Farmington Hills Senior Center. The volunteer program is operated by the American Association of Retired Persons.

"The program is designed to do taxes for lower income people who are 60 years of age and older. However, we don't turn down people that are a few years or more under that age," said Bob Wightman, local coordinator.

Call 473-1830 for more information.

Bridging the chasm

Forum addresses peace for Israelis, Palestinians



BY KATHIE O'DONOHUE
SPECIAL WRITER

Can there be a peaceful solution to the Israel/Palestinian conflict? While both sides agree peace is sorely needed, there is no consensus on whether it is feasible, at least given the current conditions in the Holy Land.

Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills hosted a Humanist forum addressing "Peace and Justice: Israelis and Palestinians," recently featuring speakers representing both sides of the conflict. Dr. May Seiklay, professor of Palestinian history at Wayne State University, spoke passionately on behalf of the Palestinians, terming the crisis "immoral injustice" affecting citizens whose "very existence is at stake."

Seiklay said that "peace is a necessity to the Palestinians" and contended the treatment by Israelis is "abominable," that not only do Palestinians suffer severe challenges to their physical health, but they are also collectively experiencing "extreme despair" in an environment where, she said, rights are largely skewed toward Israel.

Cities and villages where Palestinians live are described by Seiklay as "a disconnected patchwork of zones" and

'Israelis want peace more than anything, even Netanyahu wants peace in spite of his extreme ideas.'

Yael Waxman

—Michigan/Israel Connection

she complained that her people are not only denied adequate legal and medical care and housing, but even "water is being taken from the Palestinians." She reported high unemployment rates and an overall lower standard of living since the early 1990s. Seiklay called Palestinians "refugees ... searching for a home."

According to Seiklay, currently "the peace process is in bad shape, but peace ... is not unattainable. Communication like this is the first step." She added that since "both peoples are here; they must learn to recognize and respect each other."

Dr. Yael Waxman, community shelter and director of the Michigan/Israel Connection of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, next presented a brief historical picture of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict which is complex, frequently confusing, and replete with points of contention, abetted by the constant stir of the audience.

Area of contention

Palestine, a region settled since early prehistoric times, has been controlled by numerous countries and conquerors, from Egypt to the Ottoman Turks. After World War I, Palestine was administered by Great Britain under a mandate of the League of Nations. Part of this mandate was the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which stated that British policy favored the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Britain governed Palestine until 1948; its administration, however, satisfied neither the majority Arabs nor the growing Jewish population. After World War II, the British continued to enforce strict regulations against Jewish immigration, despite pressures of the refugees from the Nazi Holocaust. Britain's position



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMKE

in Palestine grew untenable, and the problem was turned over to the UN General Assembly, which recommended the establishment of separate Arab and Jewish states. The State of Israel was proclaimed May 14, 1948. From the ensuing war with the Arab states, which did not recognize Israel's claim, Israel emerged with about 50 percent more land than it had been allotted under the UN plan. An exodus of Palestinian Arabs took place, and they became refugees in surrounding Arab countries.

At a summit in 1974, the Arab League recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole spokesman for the Palestine Arabs, a position strongly supported by Third World countries. The PLO continued to aim as its goal the elimination of Israel and conversion of territory encompassed by the Palestine mandate into an independent country of Muslims, Christians and Jews, a position that enunciated in the PLO charter of 1969.

Waxman said, "After World War II, everyone in the world knew the Jews needed a homeland, therefore Palestine was divided between Israel and Jordan." Heated debate arose between those in attendance regarding the particulars of this assertion, with differing views about the partitioning of Pales-

'The process is in bad shape, but peace is not unattainable.'

May Seiklay

—professor of Palestinian history

tine.

Waxman insisted "Israelis want peace more than anything," and though she doesn't support the current leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, she said "even Netanyahu wants peace in spite of his sometimes extreme ideas." She asked, "Why is it ... every time the Palestinian issue arises, Israel is considered entirely responsible for it? What about the Arabs?"

The main beneficiary

Seiklay strongly countered, stating that Israel has been a main beneficiary of the peace process. "Israel has been the lone voice in setting up security where it benefits (and the Palestinians do not)."

Waxman mused, "I would like to wake up in the morning and have to deal with Bill Clinton's affair as the worst thing that has happened." She spoke of personal losses, including the deaths of two close relatives killed in Israeli wars.

Active in education in communities both in Israel and the U.S., Waxman offered, "We teach teachers, 'If you want someone to respect you, respect them' and feels that respect is an essential ingredient in the peace formula. 'The future between Palestine and Israel ... is talking and listening.'"

An elderly Palestinian woman sobbed quietly, reflecting on the dispossession of her family from Palestine. An angry and disappointed Palestinian sympathizer abruptly left the meeting, and a host of complex questions ensues without simple answers, if indeed, there are answers at all.

Norine Cimmino, a Birmingham Temple member, asked Waxman, "Aside from politics, does Israel agree there is a human rights issue involved?" Waxman answered affirmatively, and trying to find some common ground, Seiklay is quick to add, "There are many

Please see PEACE, B2

Man's best friend entertains seniors

BY MARY RODRIGUE

STAFF WRITER
mrodrique@bc.com

He's only 9 months old, but this guy can get quite affectionate with people who've been on earth for eight or more decades. In fact, Marbles the collie greeted each senior resident of Halsted Place in Farmington Hills like a dear old friend on a recent visit.

His owner and trainer, Bev Cornell, brings Marbles to visit the residents in this assisted living senior facility once every few weeks. And by the looks on the faces of more than a dozen residents who came into the activities room last Thursday morning to see the large furry dog, it is a visitor they welcome with open arms.

Rebecca Ehrnpreis reached down for a face nuzzling from Marbles. "It's very pleasant living here," she said. "It's a congenial place."

For many of the residents, a visit from Marbles is like a stroll down memory lane, conjuring up images of beloved pets from their past. All, how-

ever, remarked on how well-behaved the young pup was — much better behaved than their mischievous pets of the past.

A gentle welcome

And indeed Marbles was a picture of decorum. He gently greeted each resident, not too exuberantly so as not to overwhelm. These walking with the aid of walkers or canes, and those in wheelchairs, he approached with particular gentleness. And though the group sat at long tables munching on doughnuts and sipping coffee, Marbles minded his manners. Though he sniffed the platter of doughnuts on a low table once or twice — a table well within his reach — he never tried to steal a treat, opting instead to settle for the crumbs that fell on the floor.

"They just love it when Marbles comes to visit," said Elaine Long, activities director for the center, which is home to 90 residents.

Irv and Clare Brandt, residents for more than six years, sat staring at their new furry friend.

Irv couldn't resist petting the large collie as he relayed stories of the boxer dogs of his youth.

"My daughter has a golden retriever, but it's not this well-behaved," he said.

Irv sang the praises of Long for bringing in Marbles and other special events. "She makes all the difference. She's exceptional."

Helen Perkowski, a resident for a year, said Marbles reminded her of a German shepherd she had for a number of years. "I love dogs,



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL TREMLER

Friendly nuzzle: Mary Kate Gohde gets a friendly "hello" from Marbles as his owner/trainer Bev Cornell watches.

especially big dogs," she said, petting Marbles gingerly.

A toy for Marbles

One elderly gentleman, partially blind and hard-of-hearing, carries a little stuffed dog in his walker basket for Marbles to play with during his visits to the center. He threw it on the floor and shook it gently in his mouth.

"I gave him a good bite before he could bite me," joked Fran George, another resident who came to see the collie. "He is big, friendly and gentle."

Mary Kate Gohde reminisced about her weimerand "with beautiful blue

eyes. There's nothing like a dog. I love him," she said, nodding toward Marbles who stood at attention nearby.

Joe Montante, a resident and a former Oakland County commissioner, snuck Marbles a bite of his doughnut.

"I love dogs," he said. "But mine weren't as nice as Marbles."

After an hour of visiting each person in the room, Marbles curled up in a corner and waited patiently until his owner was ready to leave. After a rousing chorus of "goodbye" and "thanks for coming" Marbles trotted outside to his waiting van for the ride home.



Old friends: Marbles gives his paw to resident Roland Geil, who keeps a stuffed animal at the ready for Marbles to play with during visits.