

YMCA retreat is place for women to relax, unwind

Women's health and well being will be the focus of the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit's Women's Wellness Getaway '99 Sept. 17-19, sponsored by Henry Ford Health System. This three-day retreat for women ages 18 and up includes wellness presentations, fitness classes, salon services, an opportunity to ascend to new heights on the challenging new climbing and much more. Women's Wellness Getaway will take place at YMCA Camp Ohiyessa in Holly.

A physician representative of the Henry Ford Health System Dermatology Clinic and Charlotte Irwin of the Center for the Healing Arts are scheduled as guest speakers and will provide insight, perspective and inspiration discussing topics including skin care and women's health and spirituality.

The getaway provides a place and space for women to unwind and get back in touch with themselves as well as renewing their commitment to a healthier lifestyle by learning how

their health is affected by nutrition, fitness, stress and spirituality," said the event's coordinator, Jody Mitchell.

While the days' activities are organized and follow a schedule, time away from the group is also incorporated allowing the women to explore the camp's grounds. Camp Ohiyessa's 300 acres of lush forests and fields, located on spring-fed Fish Lake, according to Mitchell, provide an ideal and tranquil setting for hiking, boating, sensory walks, meditation or even a chance to gather your thoughts.

"Do as little or as much as you like, there's something for everyone," she noted. Salon services are offered at an additional cost.

For more information or to register for the YMCA Women's Wellness Getaway, at \$130 per person (payment plans are available), contact Mitchell at (313) 267-5300, ext. 392.



Rouge prime territory for mink, not marten

Q: We think we saw a marten hunting along the Rouge River right here in the Farmington area. It was about two feet long, almost black in color as it came out of the water. Do we have martens in our area?

A: No, pine martens are not found in our area of the state although they do live in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula.

From your description, what you probably saw was a mink. Actually, we have a healthy population in our area although they are rarely seen by humans. When dry, their fur is usually a rich brown color. But, when wet, it can look almost black. They spend most of their lives traveling streambanks looking for food. In our area, I have seen their efforts to feed on muskrats. One year, a mink killed and ate six muskrats that were living in a den along the creek in our yard. Each skull I found had two bite marks at its base. They also eat rabbits, mice, chipmunks, fish, snakes, frogs and varieties of marsh birds. I have seen them occasionally hunting in the fields in our parks quite a way from water.

If alarmed, they can discharge an anal gland that smells similar to skunks but does not carry as far. It is nice to know that this secretive creature is alive and living quite well in our urban communities. You were treated to the sighting; enjoy it.

Q: We recently have had black squirrels at our bird feeders. Is this a new variety and where did they come from?

A: Black squirrels are actually a color form of the gray squirrel. Some of them can also be brown in color or combinations of gray, brown and black. In recent years, the black form has moved into new areas of our community. A few years ago, I saw a black-gray squirrel with a white tail and one with a black body and a coppery brown tail. They looked like nature played a joke by putting these color combinations together. All the forms of gray squirrel are very intelligent and will surprise you of their adeptness at getting into bird feeders. Their varied colors really liven up a winter landscape. Fox, red and flying squirrels are also found in our area.

Q: I have heard that Farmington and Farmington Hills share forms of nature as city symbols. What are they?

A: A few years ago both cities discussed adopting mutual city symbols. Farmington already had the oak tree as the tree and the daisy as the flower, so a contest was held through the Observer to choose a bird, which eventually became the cardinal and the giant swallowtail was chosen as the butterfly. These beautiful symbols were put on T-shirts, sweatshirts, and tote bags.

Q: Many years ago we used to enjoy seeing ring necked pheasants at our winter bird feeders. We do not see them anymore. Can you tell us why they are not around?

A: Habitat, habitat, habitat. That is the key to their survival. Most people like nature but do not understand the needs of nature. Just as we carry on our lives in our habitats, called houses, apartments, etc., all of the natural world needs a place to call home. We humans have a horrible track record overall when it comes to protecting the homes of other living things. When our area was still farms, unmowed fields and fencerows were found in this area. This was prime pheasant habitat. Now our area is mostly developed and many suburbanites think any remaining fields should be mowed.

Hence, no pheasant habitat, not pheasants.

Plus, with the proliferation of raccoons and other predators, especially loose house cats allowed to roam by uncaring owners, these beautiful birds as well as other ground nesting birds do not have much of a chance. If future generations are to inherit a world of natural wonder, then humankind must educate itself to understand that all living things need a place to call home or else the only place members of the natural world will be found is in books and zoos. And that would be very sad indeed.

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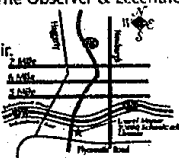
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