

CHAT ROOM



KATHIE O'DONOHUE

Leaving baby days behind with sadness

They ebb and flow as waves, feelings of sadness inexplicably alternating with calm resignation, in recognition that the "baby days" are now in my past.

I wonder at the tears I restrain and those I unleash: are they silly or profound? Meaningful or foolish? Perhaps they merely reveal the ambivalence I feel now that my youngest child is seven and rapidly moving outside the sphere of Mom.

At this point in life, reactions seem as varied as the women who experience them. Many readily accept that they are "done"; others feel a wistfulness for a spell, and within a few there dwells a lingering ache for quite some time.

For me, there is a sense of a lengthy season coming to a close. At times I wonder what to do next, because being a mother shaped all but the most basic aspects of my being for such a long time. A small warm head sleeping on my shoulder or yet another toddler underfoot marked the course of my days, my needs and theirs, my very identity.

Mixed blessings

Watching a child move from maternal attachment to the threshold of adulthood is so much more than daunting, sobering. Equal parts excitement and uneasiness accompany each instance of a child surpassing my height, each time a boy's arms grow sinewy and as spirits become restless for greater adventure.

Simultaneously a welcome miracle and a loss, part of me is taken away in the process, part that will never be back at least not in the same way. I seek something to replace the hole, packing to fill the wound.

Inside my mind there seems to be a place where only the briefest of glimpses are allowed at a given time. It is the place where the firm realization resides that babies are no longer, the place where I am the oldest mother among the mothers of my youngest child's friends, the place where I must graciously submit to fate, to gently move beyond and find meaning in something other than child-rearing.

Yet, I can't help but look back. The greatest blessings and achievements of my life have been my children, with all the bumps along the road, the heartache, times of profound uncertainty and unknowing.

What next?

And the question continuously nags just above consciousness: where do I go from here? I heard that all throughout the years, voice upon voice, seasoned moms encouraging - no, exhorting - us fledgling moms to "enjoy them while they're young." Life at that point always seemed so hectic that there was never enough time to truly relax. And now that the time of savoring is just about past, I sometimes think I didn't enjoy their little years quite enough, though, would I ever have?

Still worse, I have now become one of the women dispensing the same advice each time I have the privilege of holding a tiny newborn bundle and wonder at ten tiny fingers and toes, breathe enchanting baby sighs, instinctively move to-and-fro and experience the scents of infants; each time I wish there were one more baby, one more season to get up in the darkness of night to become acquainted with another, to give, to love in such a way.

I cherish the young people my children have grown to be, and though they need me in a less physical way, they now seem to need me in more of an emotional/mental way. I can't afford to waste my energy mourning the passage of this stage of my life, for I need all my strength to launch these children into an ever more challenging world.

Are my feelings shades of what's to come when they grow up and move away? The leaving - will it seem gradual, or all-at-once? Will it be like the quiet I first experienced when everyone was finally in school? Or like the aftermath of a vacation - almost as if it never was - will it feel

Senior program targets boomers

■ The Farmington Hills senior adult department is offering nighttime classes for the first time this fall in an effort to attract younger participants.

BY MARY RODRIQUE
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A wine tasting, classes to learn how to parent aging parents, and an introduction into some of the New Age fitness classes are but a few of the offerings the Farmington Hills senior adult department hopes will lure baby boomer seniors into the Costick Center this fall.

"We're hoping to attract the 50- to 60-year-old crowd with these evening programs," said Chris Hebert, senior adult programmer.

This is the first time the department is offering senior adult evening classes. "We want to show this age group what we have to offer. That's our motivation," said Hebert.

Classes are to be held in the Costick Activities Center at 31555 11 Mile Road, east of Middlebelt, in Farmington Hills. The center has been under renovation the past several months and is now home to the Special Services and Parks and Recreation departments in addition to the Senior Adult department. A new feature will be a permanent art gallery to showcase the works of local artists.

Things get rolling from 7-9 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 4 with the first of four weekly seminars on "Parenting Your Parent," facilitated by the Oakland County Health Division Services to the Aging.

Sessions will continue on three consecutive Tuesdays, Sept. 11, 18 and 25, from 7-9 p.m. The workshop is targeted to the sandwich generation who care for aging family members while still raising their own children. Some of the areas to be covered include discussing caretaker's feelings and needs, exploring interventions, living arrangement



options and community resources. A material fee of \$12 will be charged and pre-registration is required.

Wine tasting

Not limited to senior adults, a "Wines Around the World" tasting is open to anyone 21 or older. It will be

held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 3 in the new art gallery in the Costick Center. Eight wines from around the world will be offered, along with breads and cheeses. The Merchant of Vino's sommelier will provide commentary on each wine. Cost is \$12 for residents and \$15 for non-residents. It's a co-spon-



Tai Chi class: Christine Snellgrove (above) holds a position for three minutes during class at the Costick Center. At left, student Angie Tsou goes through her moves.

sored by the senior division and the Heritage.

A fitness open house at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 17 will help to demystify all the new fitness classes offered today. See a demonstration by experts of Tai Chi, Chuan, Chi Kung, Yoga, and Pilates matwork to learn what's right for you. If there's enough interest, the open house could generate some new fitness classes being offered at the Costick Center, Hebert said. Cost is \$5 and pre-registration is required.

Finally on Thursdays beginning Oct. 18, a four-part workshop will begin on "Connecting Past to Future: Your Life Story Legacy." Personal historian Donna Ellis will lead the class through developing and organizing family histories by capturing oral histories, creating photo journals and showing other useful techniques. It will run from 7-9 p.m. and continue Oct. 25, Nov. 1 and Nov. 8. Cost is \$35.

Hebert said that residency in Farmington or Farmington Hills is not required to join in the programming. For more information, call the senior adult division at 473-9570.

Star LPGA golfer remembers roots



The 11th annual Meg Mallon golf outing for Mercy High raised \$25,000 for the Farmington Hills school last week at Walnut Creek Country Club

■ 'The proceeds will help fund a strong and innovative information technology program at Mercy.'

Julie Earle
—Mercy spokeswoman

in South Lyon.

Alumni, parents and company sponsors were among the 152 golfers who hit the links with Mallon, a Mercy alumna and LPGA star golfer.

Mallon has finished first in 13 LPGA tournaments and in 2000 she became one of the four players in LPGA history to earn \$1 million in a single season. This year she recorded the tour's first hole-in-one during the first round of play at the YourLife Vitamins LPGA Classic.

"The proceeds will help fund a strong and innovative information technology program at Mercy," said Julie Earle, a Mercy spokeswoman.

The Mercy High golf team was ranked number one in the state this year. Student Erin Borowiec was voted Miss Golf for Michigan. She was at the outing last Monday.

Twenty-one years ago, Mallon hit her first drive on the Mercy home golf course with the first Mercy golf team. Today she makes her home in Florida but continues to support the school by hosting the annual golf benefit.

For more photos from the Meg Mallon golf outing, please turn to Page C-2.

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Reunion: Meg Mallon talks with Mercy golf team alumnae Maureen McFadden and Joanna Brutell.

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