

Human rights group works to end violence and injustice

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

It's difficult for Americans to relate to human rights issues in other countries.

"Several of the rights we defend may sound trivial to someone who is born into one of the most affluent free regions of the world," said Dan Brooks, an Amnesty International member. "These

include right to life, freedom from torture and freedom from slavery," Students Brooks and Lydia Bilinsky, a fellow speaker, are part of the Amnesty International group based at the University of Michigan campus. The group, which started in the 1960s, is devoted to promotion of human rights and discovery of human rights abuses in all countries. Both spoke at the recent International

Symposium at Farmington High School. It's difficult to conceive of government-sanctioned and government-sponsored torture, slavery, murder and genocide, Brooks said. Identified crimes like those seen during the Holocaust are being committed by governments today, he said. It's up to everyone to educate themselves and others, Brooks said.

The group also pressures other governments with letters to release "prisoners of conscience." "Especially student groups try to give publicity to these atrocities," Bilinsky said. "Farmington is a very affluent area even within America. It can seem very far and distant, the bad things which are going on. For somebody suffering

these offenses, it is very real." Amnesty International addresses about seven or eight different "campaigns" in other countries annually. About 27 million people are estimated to be in some form of slavery, like debt bondage, she said. Children and grandchildren often are forced to work off the debt of their fathers and grandfathers. "You don't get paid," Bilinsky said. "You are an indentured servant." Forced prostitution occurs with women in some Eastern European countries, Bilinsky said. "They are offered jobs as waitresses and sold into brothels. Servitude goes on. They kidnap young kids in some countries and make them work on cocoa farms." She urged students to learn

more about the source of chocolate production but didn't name specific chocolate brands. Amnesty International often rallies when injustices are done. In one case, a Nigerian woman had a child out of wedlock and a traditional, local tribal court decided to seek vigilante justice. "They decided she should be sentenced to death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock," Bilinsky said. "Interestingly, the guy denied he had sex with her and they let him go. There was a huge public outcry, a lot of which was because of Amnesty International." The stoning was postponed until the woman weaned her child, and Amnesty International is still working on the case. The organization is also concerned about

female genital mutilation, rape and domestic violence are found in other countries. In Pakistan, a woman was shot dead in her lawyer's office because she sought divorce from her husband who beat her while she was pregnant. "Her family felt, in seeking a divorce, she had tarnished their honor," Bilinsky said. "For this, they hired an assassin. She was killed by her own family. They even took a shot at the lawyer, but the lawyer didn't die." She lauded Amnesty International's efforts in getting a bill passed in Kenya prohibiting domestic violence. "The bill classifies psychological as well as physical violence," she said.

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RECREATION NEWS

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Parkey's Halloween Programs
Kids ages 3-5 can have fun

with Parkey's Pumpkin Painting 10-11:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 26 and kids ages 6-10 can enjoy Parkey's Pumpkin Carve 12:30-2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26. The cost is \$10 per child. Pre-registration is required.

Haunted Hike Stations

The Recreation Division is looking for groups that would be interested in creating a station for the annual Halloween Haunted Hike. The event will be held 7:30-9:30 p.m. p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 25 and 26 in Heritage Park. Interested parties should contact Cathy at (248) 473-1802. Participating groups will be paid a stipend of \$150 for participating both days.

Pumpkin Painting Party
Painting fun for the whole

family. Decorate pumpkins with poster paint 2-3:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 19 at the Heritage Park Day Camp Building. When you are done creating your pumpkin, a snack and juice will be served. The cost is \$8 per person.

Open Gym

Get your exercise at the Costick Activities Center Gym (11 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster).

The cost to participate for residents 17 and under is \$2; non-residents are \$4.



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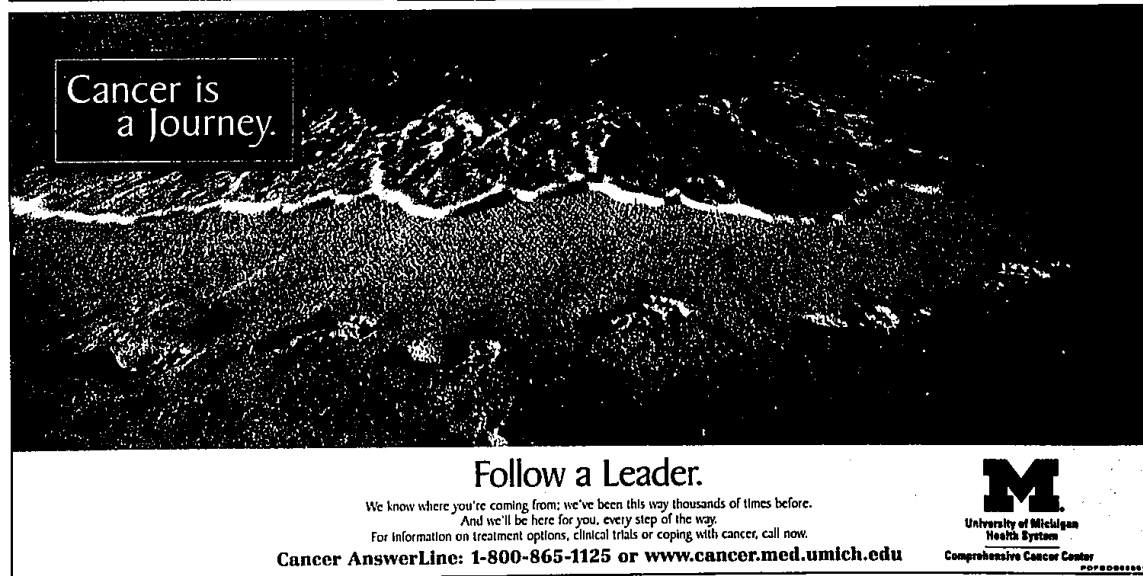


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