

Women's Studies aims at understanding self

By LORAIN McCLISH

The coordinator of the Women's Studies Program in the College of Lifelong Learning is now in the throes of preparing for the next two-week workshop geared to help participants gain a knowledge and understanding of themselves.

"If nothing else, if you get nothing else out of it at all, I can promise you it is great for your self-esteem," said Betty Raitt from her offices in Wayne State University's Southfield Center on 11 Mile Road.

SHE IS ADAMANT in her conviction that women as a whole are "consistently under-selling themselves," and that after one 24-hour course she sees the participants in her workshops undergo "a change that is just beautiful to watch."

She is equally adamant that there is an untapped potential in all women, no matter what their role in life.

Understanding yourself is the prime target of the workshops, though they also cover acquiring skills in decision making, developing competence in interpersonal relationships and learning how cultural values and social practices influence human interaction.

A bonus to this is gaining two hours credit, getting back into a college (albeit informal) situation, and hopefully, opening up the door to new worlds.

THE COUNSELORS at the college are of one mind on this subject: if they are confronted with a woman who has grown tired of the bridge parties and the fashion shows and is generally floundering around not sure of what she wants to do

with the rest of her life, her starting place is in the weekend workshops.

The bulk of the participants are "women whose children have left the coop, the divorced and the widowed, but that isn't always so and age is no factor. They are all ages," Mrs. Raitt says.

"They find they are not alone in their search for whatever you want to call it—identity, personal growth, self-awareness. They are all faced with today's issues and the roles society has placed on them. They are not alone in their feelings and aspirations. They all feel a thwarting of their development even though some can't put it into words."

"But it all boils down to the identity crisis. That (phenomena) which generally comes when the last kid leaves the roost and you find yourself saying 'Who Am I?'"

MRS. RAITT said her job is not necessarily to push women back into school, though the two-hour credit is a head start, "and we do our best to channel you through in the right direction."

She continued, "A career is not for everyone, nor is volunteering, nor is anything for that matter. I want all women to get introduced to that person they call me and have them explore foreign worlds and have them experience some self-growth."

Mrs. Raitt's summer workshop will be held in the staff at Wayne State University's College of Lifelong Learning in Southfield on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 2-4 and Aug. 9-11. Friday hours are from 7-10 p.m.; Saturday sessions run from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; and Sunday sessions go from 1-4 p.m.

Registrations may be made by dropping into the center, or calling Mrs. Raitt.



BETTY RAITT

New degree at WSU veers from tradition

By LORAIN McCLISH

There was a lot of cheering among the staff at Wayne State University's College of Lifelong Learning in Southfield when the university's board of governor's recently approved a new degree. It's called bachelor of general studies which can be pursued on evenings or weekends and takes some sharp turns from the traditional on-campus concepts of study.

As Clare Orians described it: "We make it very easy for anyone to start or come back to college."

MS. ORIANS is a counselor at the school, a Farmington resident and recent divorcee whose job is to give personal individual guidance to those who come seeking a college education after periods of interruption in their formal schooling.

The number who come is estimated to be at least four times as many now as in 1950, either to participate in specialized credit-free programs or to earn a degree. Then, too, there are those who aren't sure what they want. And those who are looking only for personal fulfillment.

Because Ms. Orians went back to school after a long interval to get her master's in adult guidance and counseling, she says, "I can tell you it's a very scary thing. But the hardest thing is walking up to that door, making the initial step, filling out that first form."

But "filling out that first form" — or the myriads of paper work that generally go hand in hand with the college acceptance process is eliminated on the Southfield campus.

"All that bureaucratic red tape is a good way to get turned off so we hold that off (for two years if you've decided to go for a degree) until you get your feet wet."

THE COLLEGE OF Lifelong Learning has a self-explanatory name. Experiments by psychologists have proved that the brain never stops learning, but social conditions seem to be the main reason that more persons are going back to school.

Trying to keep up with technology brings a lot back into the classroom. More persons are not only changing jobs but changing professions as they approach middle years. The divorce

rate puts a lot of women back into school. And forced retirement very often sets off another career.

It is the feeling of the staff that adults do better scholastically "than the kids who are not paying their own way" and the flexibility in the curriculum itself with a large choice of studies within a given field provokes both more incentive and more enthusiasm.

Earning a bachelor of general studies does not require what Edward Cieslak, director of student services, calls "the biggest bugaboos for women in school — math and languages. 'English or social studies doesn't seem to bug them, but math and languages seem to. There is a science year sequence (that's required) but that follows what we call the horizontal treatment.'"

He explained there is a general feeling that there is no need for anyone to have any great depth in astronomy or biology, for example, anymore in general studies. "So those who walk into this program aren't scared right out of their socks right from the beginning."

THE STAFF IS geared to work on the nothing-succeeds-like-success theory, "so we guide them into courses they can handle," Ms. Orians said. She called her own back-to-school experience "a feeling of aliveness. When I got my first report card I felt 10 feet tall."

She attended school with the 18-22 year old set. Even so, she says, "We all had the same homework, the same teachers, the same assignments and all the nervousness was gone completely on the second day when they invited me out to have a beer with them."

The College of Lifelong Learning classes are housed in the old Nike missile site on Eleven Mile Road and are run on the quarterly semester basis "so we're going here continuously," Ms. Orians said.

Most classes start after 4:30 p.m. on weekdays. We're open all weekends. If there is a desire for it we'll start day classes too.

"We welcome visitors. If they stop in to see us we'll show them what we have to offer. The hardest step is getting up to the door. We'll do the rest."



CLARE ORIANS