

Advocate for the arts takes new post

By LORRAINE MCCLISE

Marlowe Belanger, who has served as chairman for the Oakland County Cultural Council since its inception, is now coordinator for cultural affairs in Oakland County.

The new position, created by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, changes Mrs. Belanger's status from a volunteer arts chairman to that of a full-time coordinator with authority over the cultural council. The position has a yearly income of \$10,500.

The majority of her salary will be paid with grants from the Michigan Council for the Arts. The county will pay a small percentage of her salary, according to Mrs. Belanger.

The job of chairman of the cultural council will remain a voluntary post. In August, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners will appoint a new chairman to the council. Until then, the vacancy is being filled by vice-chairman Lillian Moffitt.

Of her new position, Mrs. Belanger says, "I am here to assist, inform and serve all artists and art-related groups in our 65 cities, villages and townships. I want them to know this office is open and everything we can do for them is without charge. I am here to champion cultural advancement."

"I also want it understood," she continued, "that we are not only addressing ourselves to the quality artist. The amateur is very important to us."

Mrs. Belanger works in her offices in the county complex, 1200 Telegraph, Pontiac. She and her secretary, Lorraine McCarty, can be reached at



Thursday, June 22, 1978

Farmington Observer

Suburban Life

(F)1B

658-0415 or 658-0730.

A GREAT DEAL of the philosophy Mrs. Belanger brings to her new job takes into account the amount of free time which is available, to today's society.

"It is important that we take advantage of that time. It is important that much of it should be used in the pursuit of the arts," she said.

"The pursuit of happiness all of our kids should have, the right to explore all of the finer things in life."

Mrs. Belanger wound up her tenure as chairman of the county's cultural council by accomplishing all 13 goals she had set for herself in promoting arts as a profession, and arts for leisure.

One of her proudest accomplishments is her successful backing of legislation which provides space for local artists' works in all of Oakland county's public buildings.

Next step is the same action on the state level.

"Why not?" she asks. "The other day Brooks Patterson asked me why all of the pictures we have now in the building were on the first floor; why couldn't we move some of them to the fourth floor. So you see our changing exhibits are noticed and they do add a lot to that building."

Other types of legislation she's working on now concern tax cuts for contributions to art agencies, copyrights and rights for the heirs of art works.

CURRENTLY, she has great hopes for a new Volunteer Action Corps; a group of about 30 persons who are in the midst of in-depth training on the subjects of volunteerism; arts and education; promotion and publicity; community programming; funding and grantsmanship.

Corps members will be guided

through class room work and seminars all summer long, and will be ready to go to work in the fall. Their job will be to assist resource persons, already appointed, in each of the county's communities, in whatever area that particular area requires.

"All of our communities are at different stages of development in promoting the arts. Where some are big on one thing, they fall short on another thing. Most of the time where they lack something, it is because no one who has the know-how has come forward. Our corps members will be on call to assist when needed in their own area of expertise, and they will be experts after their training," she said.

Mrs. Belanger is a Farmington Hills resident who put all of her own know-how to work in the Farmington Area Arts Commission, which was ultimately given local government sanction to become the Farmington Area

Arts Council, an official wing of the local government.

In turn, the arts related projects she brought to the community were adopted by the Michigan Council of the Arts.

BECAUSE OF the uniqueness of these programs, many were funded by the state council, and many of them have been put into practice by communities throughout the state.

A very successful involvement, for the arts conference has been emulated by a number of communities, both in and out of the state. The conference brought together individuals and representatives of business groups, schools and churches for cooperative effort in promoting the arts.

She toured the state, at the request of the Michigan Council for the Arts, to discussing the school art program which she initiated in the Farmington area. The enrichment program brought professionals in both the performing and exhibiting arts into the schools for performances, lectures and workshops.

In addition to her new position as coordinator for the county's cultural affairs, she retains a seat on the Oakland County Cultural Council; serves on the board of Michigan Association of Art Agencies, and is a member of the board of review for grants requests to the Michigan Council for the Arts.

She also retains her seat on the Farmington Area Arts Council.

"That's my baby," she says. "I developed it from infancy. That's where it all started."



MARLOWE BELANGER

"It's the pursuit of happiness all of our kids should have; the right to explore all of the finer things in life."

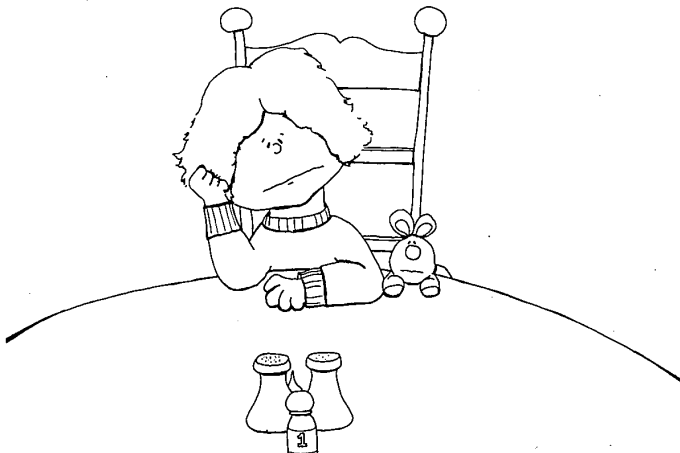
—Marlowe Belanger



JANET SINBERG

Janet Sinberg wrote a children's book on divorce in an effort to be helpful and give people a tool they might use at a time of crisis. It's designed to be a communication link for children and their divorcing parents, a book to pick up at a quiet time and share. Written from the child's point of view, it's aim is to help parents explain divorce in a rational way to their children. Ms. Sinberg is contemplating writing a series of books on life crises such as death and accepting a step-parent. (Illustration is from "Divorce is a Grown Up Problem" written by Janet Sinberg and illustrated by Nancy Gray.)

Mommy and Daddy got a divorce.
I don't even know what divorce means.
They spend a lot of time trying to explain it to me because I just don't understand.



Book gives kids a handle on divorce

By SHIRLEE IDEN

"Daddy left because I spilled spaghetti on the floor."

Sound bizarre? Janet Sinberg doesn't think so. She understands that thoughts like these are often a child's perception of divorce.

Ms. Sinberg has been through a divorce herself, has worked with many children of divorce, is a trained child development expert and has written a book called "Divorce is a Grown-up Problem."

Designed to be a communication tool for children and their divorcing parents, it's a "lap" book, meant to be read aloud to a child by one, or maybe both parents at different times.

Designer Nancy Gray did the illustration which leaves the sex of the child ambiguous, making the book appropriate for both girls and boys. It's done as a coloring book giving children a chance to express their feelings in color.

"It's been like a Mickey Rooney movie," Ms. Sinberg said of her experience writing the book. "I wanted a book for my kids when I was getting a

"Most divorcing parents can't easily talk with their children about impending divorce because they feel guilty, angry and very confused themselves."

— Janet Sinberg

divorce. There were books for adults but nothing for kids."

She explained that after her separation from her husband, she went back to school and earned an MA in child development and child care, also taking a year of training in play therapy at the Pittsburgh Psychoanalytic Center.

"I KNEW I'd do my MA thesis on the effect of divorce on kids, so I figured I could do the book for kids at the same time," she said.

"I've done a lot of individual therapeutic work with kids and many were children of divorce. They'd come in with a child in trouble and I'd learn there was a divorce in the picture."

Ms. Sinberg said her aim is to help

parents explain divorce in a rational way to their children.

"That's why I decided to write it from the child's point of view. It's a different thing because the parents are in such despair themselves. And there are no support systems available," she added.

When a child's parents are divorcing, the kid needs extra support and open, honest communication with both parents if he is to make a healthy adjustment to his changed family.

Parents need to be aware of what their child is experiencing, such as thinking that his spaghetti spill may have caused the split.

Most divorcing parents can't easily talk with their children about the impending divorce, because they feel

guilty, angry and very confused themselves, Ms. Sinberg explained.

In her own case, she wanted to help her three young sons, now six, seven and nine understand what was happening to their parents.

Ms. Sinberg said her book shows the stages of what a child feels.

"First they feel angry, then vulnerable, and threatened and then they feel they are to blame," she said.

"HAVING another divorced family on the block doesn't help either."

The preface of her book has a lot of good information for divorcing parents. It tells them that the child needs constant reassurance of parental love. "He may believe that because you stopped loving your former spouse you might stop loving him. He needs to be told this won't ever happen," she explained.

"You might say something about a parent's love being a special kind of love that never changes."

Parents shouldn't go into great detail about why they sought a divorce. A simple explanation is easier

to understand and less threatening.

Some children feel guilty and responsible and may test their parents with constant misbehavior. It's important to tell a child that he is not responsible and is not to blame.

Release date for the "lap" book was in mid-April but many orders were filled before that and it went into a second printing before it was even released.

"It may go to a third printing soon," Ms. Sinberg said. "But it's not a novel, it'll be around for a long time."

She said she contemplates a series of such books on life crises such as death, divorce and step-parents. "You don't want to wait to see your kids hurting," she said.

Currently she is working with blind children who are multiply handicapped at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children. She also teaches a divorce seminar at a community college.

"BEFORE THIS I worked primarily with normal children and it's interesting because these kids now may be retarded or look funny and what I'm

finding is my own sons are incredibly curious and even threatened by my working with kids who are different."

She said she takes them to work with her occasionally to introduce them to handicapped people. "They're getting confronted with the fact that not all kids are well endowed and normal like they are."

Asked if she feels like a celebrity, she throws back her head and laughs. "No, I truly feel like this really schlep lady who does wear Levis all the time," she said.

"I've written a book that can be helpful and I'm trying to give a tool to people at a time of crisis. In order to publicize it you do become a media person."

"I just met Douglas Kiker an hour ago and I also met a blind entertainer and we talked for an hour. It's not making me a different person but perhaps it's broadening my perspective."

She said her kids think they'll be rich and they like that. But even more they like the fact that the book is dedicated to them.

Something for everybody

Farmington libraries list their summer agenda

The Farmington Community Library has open programs and registration-required activities for preschoolers, youth, teens, adults and handicapped persons scheduled throughout the summer.

Even for vacationers, the library offers a summer loan arrangement to eliminate late-return charges.

No registration is necessary for preschoolers who want to learn about space fantasies or join in producing a play. Dates are July 18 and Aug. 1, in the mornings at the Farmington branch and afternoons at the Hills branch.

Elementary school students may swap comic books, see a science fic-

tion thriller and learn about "Goofy's Glider" on July 6, 20 and Aug. 3 in the afternoon at the Farmington branch and mornings in the Hills branch.

These programs are open for the first-sixth graders, who can stop by. Other programs require pre-registration, which is being taken now in both libraries.

"Space Miracles," "Make Your Own Robots" and "Make-up Monsters" will run at both libraries with registrations taken on a first-come-first-served basis.

THE OAKLAND County Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped will sponsor a summer reading pro-

gram for juvenile Talking Book readers. For details, call the library at 553-0300.

FLIP (Farmington Library Instant Play) runs from July 10-Aug. 7. FLIP can be scheduled by any one in the area who can guarantee an audience of 30-40 three and four year olds.

The libraries will furnish the party. Sponsors, who may not do no charge admission, must be responsible for the publicity and furnish a darkened area with an electrical outlet for showing films or slides. There is no charge to the sponsors.

The 11-15 year olds interested in learn simple procedures and skills

they can use while baby sitting may sign up for a course taught by American National Red Cross-certified instructors. The class will meet 2-4 p.m. Mondays, July 10-31, in the Farmington Hills branch on Twelve Mile.

Registrations are being taken now for young adults who want to learn about "The Big Expansion" set for July 5, or join the Summer Reading Club for Teens.

THE YOUTH Volunteer Program is designed to involve teens in assisting with library activities. Volunteers will learn about library procedure by helping the staff.

Among volunteers' duties will be

producing a play, to be presented at a children's program in August, and all teens who are volunteers, or enrolled in the summer reading club, will be invited to a party at the end of the summer.

Free films on the summer schedule are "Go Ask Alvin," "Yellow Submarine," "Huckleberry Finn" and "Where the Lilies Bloom," all geared for young adults. Dates and times will be listed in the Farmington Observer's Community Calendar.

The informal book discussion groups continue through the summer at 7 p.m. on Thursdays in the Farmington Branch, 23500 Library.

"Hard Times" by Dickens will be discussed July 6 and "To the Light House" by Virginia Woolf is set for July 20. Copies of all books for discussion are available at the Farmington branch. Registration is not necessary, but Roz Narbutas will take inquiries at 474-7770.

The Porta-Book Program is available to all household persons. Large-print books, records, cassettes, and books from the shelves will be delivered without charge for persons confined to their home either because of illness or lack of transportation. Porta-Book requests should be directed to the Twelve Mile library at 553-0300.