

# Community Center declared an historical site

By LORAIN McCLISH

The Georgian Manor house that serves the area as the Farmington Community Center has been declared a Michigan Historical Site by the State Historical Commission.

Known for many years as Longacre House, when it was owned by the Luman Goodenough family, the stately home on Farmington Road, and its 500-foot stone wall, is unique in Oakland County.

The center's board of directors give credit to Paul Schreiber, a former center board member and a member of

the Farmington Historical Society, for the meticulous work needed to earn the historical site designation.

Robert Rowe and Vilas Bates, both historical society members, and John Allen, a Farmington architect, assisted Schreiber in compiling the necessary information. Eleanor Spicer, daughter of Luman Goodenough, and her son, Nick Spicer, cooperated in providing background material to make the designation possible.

In 1968 the heirs of the property gave the house and five acres of land to the greater Farmington area to be used as a community center. Mrs. Spicer is

the only living child of Goodenough, and one of the three donors. The others were Mrs. George Schemm and Daniel Goodenough.

THE COMMUNITY responded by raising \$65,000 to renovate the building, and put in suitable driveways and parking lots for public use. The building opened its doors on Sept. 7, 1969 offering classes, meeting space, recreational and social activities.

The ensuing boards of directors, with limited funds and help from the community, have continued to preserve the building as a busy and successful center. Meanwhile, two local

garden clubs, Hill and Dale and Farmington Garden Club, came forward with time and talent and money to maintain the gardens.

The earliest portion of the house was built by Palmer Sherman in 1869. Its thick walls, low doors and hand hewn fireplace exemplify the simple farm houses of the post Civil War era.

Goodenough acquired the house in the early 1900s and gradually added rooms and wings. Its design reflects the influence of Marcus Burroughs, a Detroit architect, who developed many large homes in the metropolitan area.

and was inspired by his strong English antecedents.

Among the features in the house are many fireplaces, hand hewn beams, Pewabic tile baths, a central stair case and an early mechanical elevator.

Longacre House is regarded today as symbolic of a life style of substantiality, but not excessively affluent people in southern Oakland County during the first third of the century.

Such a life style was unique in this area.

As a community center, many hundreds of people pass through its doors every week. Children and young people, many of whom have grown up in contemporary ranch style homes, are said to especially enjoy the stairways, the fireplaces and the meandering halls.

Older people take pleasure in the architectural details, the spacious rooms with lovely views, the natural outdoor amphitheatre or the prayer carved in the garden wall.

Next job for the board of directors is finding a suitable historical marker.



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# The stretch-bend-3-4's keep luring them to The Gathering Place

By LORAIN McCLISH

At 11:15 a.m. every Wednesday, about 30 persons file into Mercy Center's gym to follow the left-right-stretch-bend-three-four directions coming from Maggie Lorida in a soothing and encouraging voice to the music. The sessions are followed by a dance class. Exercise in the pool is scheduled for Fridays.

The entire program is backed up with square dancing, yoga and a music day, when seniors at The Gathering Place dance to a band made up of their own members.

Mrs. Lorida zeros in on exercises that will make for flexibility.

Karen Ross, the senior citizen coordinator who initiated the first exercise classes at the center and still leads several classes, focuses on the joints, "or anywhere there might be stiffness," she says.

There are always onlookers on the sidelines. "They come to watch," Ms. Ross said. "In a few sessions of watching, we'll see them tapping their feet or swaying to the music. Then they get into the last row. Then they are dancing."

THE EXERCISE and dance classes remain the largest of any offered to drop-ins at the center. It is the only part of the program that has steadily grown. It has attracted the most attention, to the list of Farmington area offerings to seniors, from all other similar groups in the metropolitan community.

In total, it has become a model for numerous agencies and centers throughout southern Michigan.

The nucleus of the dance group has become a touring group showing what can be done to break up what Ms. Ross

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-Karen Ross

called "the old stereotype of if you lead you'll break."

She continued, "It works on a psychological as well as a physical level. We mix up age groups for social experiences. The seniors talk about their program as well as show them. We perform wherever we can to students (of gerontology) in Scholcraft and Madonna College, to Foster Grandparents. This week we have an intern from Central Michigan going through our program with us."

KAREN ROSS was hired by Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department to head up the area's after-school program, but never felt her degree in physical education was being put to its best use in that job.

While in that position she was asked, one day, to go over to The Gathering Place to help move some tables. "I've been here ever since," she said, even though the first time she offered the exercise class she had three takers.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Lorida, who had made her living for many years as a singer and a dancer and had received her LFN degree in Providence Hospital, was working as a visiting nurse in Livonia and working on her associates degree in gerontology at Madonna.

She became acquainted with The Gathering Place as an intern to fulfill

requirements for the course, and took over some of the dance classes as the numbers kept growing in numbers.

Ms. Ross credits the success of the overall program to its drop-in informality, a philosophy she stresses when she lectures or gives workshops to others who are working with seniors.

"There are no rules," she said. "No special clothes. No attendance is taken. There is no charge. There is no eight-week session that you have to sign up for. There is no pressure. There is no teacher to ask you why you didn't show up last week."

"Everything that is offered here is offered on a choice basis. We use the phrase 'drop-in' very literally."

She also credits the program's success to "the people we hire. They have to be enthusiastic about what we're doing."

MRS. LORIDA states that "dancing is good for everything," and believes the psychological benefits may well outweigh the physical ones.

"I love what I'm doing. I enjoy seeing the class just let go, just dancing for the joy of it. Sometimes I dance in back of the class just to see the expressions on their faces, see the escape it brings. It is so much more effective than the traditional one-two, one-two exercises," she says.



Maggie Lorida concentrates on exercises that allow more flexibility during informal sessions that ultimately lure spectators from the sidelines onto Mercy Center's gym floor. Mrs. Lorida is a former profes-

sional dancer, and is working on her associates degree in gerontology at Madonna College. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

# Novice writers invited to hobnob with the pros

By SUSAN TAUBER

Budding writers will be able to rub shoulders with 34 authors, editors,

playwrights, poets and journalists from all over the country at the 17th annual Craftsmanship of Creative Writing Conference Oct. 20-21 at Oakland University.

Sponsored by OU Division of Continuing Education and Detroit Women Writers, the conference will offer 26 workshops covering such topics as writing about real people, how to find material for articles, selling your short story and how to write and submit a play.

Conference hours are noon to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 20 and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 21, at Oakland Center Building.

On Friday, participants can take limited enrollment three-hour sessions on writing. Milan Stitt, author of the play, "The Runner Stumbles," which was selected as one of 10 best plays for the 1978 Broadway season, will conduct the workshop on "Drama: Structure is Meaning."

"The structure of drama or the structure of the play is its meaning," said Stitt, a Detroit native.

Other teachers for the Friday labs are poet Judith Goren, writing consul-

ant in schools for Michigan Council of the Arts; Julia Grice, former Oakland County resident and author of the romantic, historical novel, "Lovellire," Iris Sanderson Jones, travel writer for the Observer & Eccentric newspapers and author of a book on making early-American dolls, and children's book writer Joan Potter Elwart.

A BREAK from the labs and workshops features Detroit Free Press columnist Nickie McWhirter. She will speak at 8:30 p.m. Friday during a cocktail reception in Meadow Brook Hall on the OU campus. Her talk is titled, "Not Now My Hair's Too Short."

The test of one's endurance begins Saturday morning with registration at 8:30 a.m. Prior to the workshops, participants will hear A Scott Berg, author of the book, "Max Perkins: Editor of Genius." He will speak about how he researched and created his books as well as lessons that can be learned from Perkins, the editor of such writers as Fitzgerald.

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# Heavy chore services to begin for seniors

Maggie Lorida, dance and exercise instructor at The Gathering Place, has taken another position in services to the area's seniors. She has been hired as the coordinator for Chore Services to Seniors, a program stemming from a grant given by the Commission on Aging.

She is now hiring two persons who will be on call to help the aging in heavy yard work, washing windows, minor maintenance for their homes, "or whatever the seniors need that they feel is a little beyond them," Mrs. Lorida said.

The services will be given "either free of charge or give as you can dona-

tion donation basis," she said. If things go according to schedule, the program should be in full operation the first week in November.

Loretta Conway, director of senior citizen activities for the two cities, Doug Gainer, head of Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department, two interns from Madonna College's gerontology department, and the Farmington Area Commission on Aging, all cooperated in the joint venture to make the grant possible.

Mrs. Lorida will continue in her job as dance and exercise instructor while working on the new chore services operation.



Limbering up exercises precede dance classes for seniors in The Gathering Place. They have toured throughout southern Michigan

destroying the myth that if you bend after a certain age, you may break. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)