



Farmington Observer

Suburban Life

Thursday, March 15, 1979

(F) 1B

Assertion training for teens?

By LORAIN McCLISH

A former high school teacher and counselor has returned to the classroom to give teenagers assertiveness training in sessions sponsored by Oakland University's Continuum Center.

Shirley Aune grins and acknowledges that this meets with raised eyebrows. "It isn't a group that one thinks would need lessons in being assertive, is it?" she said, "but we're not in business to develop programs without a need."

"We started this for a two-fold reason; our interest in teens and our interest in helping people of all ages learn some assertive communications skills and take more control of their lives."

The Farmington Hills resident is now in the midst of her second session of workshops for the teens and simultaneously co-leads a course called "Considering Change" which aids those who are at a crossroads of personal or career decisions.

She is pleased with the results of the center's first course ever offered specifically for teens.

"We had a few who were pretty sure must have been pushed into the class by their folks, but they stayed with it, and we have a couple coming into the next class to tell others about their experiences with their new assertive skills," she said.

MRS. AUNE describes herself as a graduate of the Continuum Center's "Personal Growth" course "which helps you get to know yourself and how you relate to others," she said.

It is also the course that serves as a foundation leading onto other courses that has ultimately developed the large bloc of peer counselors the center now has to carry on personal enrichment courses throughout the metropolitan area.

The overall goal, Mrs. Aune said, "is to give some clear cut direction to your life."

This would apply to transitions and adjustments having to do with retirement, divorce, career, aging, and getting a grip on the options and alternatives that are available.

The sessions on assertion are basically the same for any group, only the situations change.

"An adult may talk about an uncomfortable situation with his boss, while a

teen talks about an uncomfortable situation with his teacher. Both know that something is wrong, but can't define it in words," Mrs. Aune said.

"We help with definitions between aggressiveness, assertiveness and submissiveness, so they (the participants) can see themselves. Then we stand back and they can come up with a solution."

She emphasized that the classes were neither teaching classes nor lectures.

"IT'S A PRACTICAL living and doing and experiencing class and we are not teachers, we are leaders," she said.

As a former math teacher she described her new role as a completely different experience working with experiential problems as opposed to giving instructions in equations.

"It's a very personal class, everybody gets to know one another. The people in the class are a captive audience. They are there because they want to be there. When they are ready to take one of our classes, they'll travel long distances to get there."

"We had residents from Madison Heights and Royal Oak in a class we offered at Harrison High last semester and that is not unusual," she said.

Mrs. Aune's first introduction to the Continuum Center was five years ago.

The interim has caused her to become "a very different person, much more aware of my own feelings and much more aware of other people's feelings."

She said she "feels very good, very right," about her role as a leader.

"Most people are very hard on themselves," she said. "They don't appreciate themselves and they all have more potential and ability than they realize. I honestly believe most people die not realizing 10 percent of their potential."

ROUGHLY one half of the Continuum Center's spring classes are now underway.

Registration for others are still being taken: "Talking With Your Physician," "Career Awareness For Nurses," "Careers In Transition," "Alternative Career Options for Teachers," "Personal Growth," "Communication for Couples," "Divorce," and "Adjusting to Retirement."

Brochures will be sent upon request and inquiries will be taken by calling the center in Rochester, 377-3033.



Shirley Aune talks about her classes with teenagers and her work with Oakland University's Continuum Center as a group leader.



Nancy Enright, coordinator of religious education for the handicapped, invites the community to open house in St. Clare Catholic Church in observance of National Mental Retardation Awareness Month. The

Mental retardation awareness

Religious education for the handicapped on view at St. Clare

By LORAIN McCLISH

St. Clare Catholic Church will observe National Mental Retardation Awareness Month with an open house beginning at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 26, in the church building on Ten Mile, east of Middlebelt.

Guests are invited to observe a regular session of religion education offered to mentally handicapped adults that is given as a missionary service by the parish.

Slides, showing other classes of religious education in action will be shown, and there will be displays showing other aspects of teaching the handicapped at St. Clare.

"Overall, it will show what we're all about here," said Nancy Enright, the coordinator of special religious education.

The program is unique in terms of duration and scope. Providing religious education for the handicapped has been an intrinsic part of the parish for 11 of the 12 years it has existed, and it serves the mentally and emotionally impaired, the learning disabled and the deaf.

About 25 assistants aid professionals in separate weekly classes tailor made for the handicap, the religious background, and the level of accomplishment. Students come from throughout the metropolitan area because similar programs are rare.

All told, there are about 90 students in the program now, ranging from 5-65,

but the classes could accommodate more and there are no restrictions for enrollment.

"THE FUNCTION for those with Catholic backgrounds is to prepare them for the sacraments; other than that we're pretty ecumenical, but if there is a particular need we have devised almost totally tutorial programs," Ms. Enright said.

Other almost tutorial programs have been devised for a person with an unusual handicap, through Sister Helene McDonald, one of the nuns on the St. Clare staff who is also on the Archdiocese staff for teaching the special education person.

"She will, and has, written us a new textbook if the need be," Ms. Enright said.

The coordinator is a member of the Farmington Ministerial Association and reaches most of those in the classes through that affiliation.

She gathers up assistants with appeals, from time to time, in Mercy High School and local Catholic colleges, and sometimes these appeals will bring more students by word of mouth.

"The truly ecumenical nature of the entire program is best seen in the weekly Saturday afternoon Worship Together Service, she said, which is conducted by guest priests and ministers.

"The services have the enthusiastic support of the clergymen who conduct it, a true sign of ecumenism in action."

Families of students in the classes are often involved in the entire program. Frequent "celebrations" are usually family affairs.

MS. ENRIGHT said that a fringe benefit developed for the parents while they were visiting and having coffee while waiting for a child.

"Our waiting room has become somewhat of an information center," she said. "There seems always to be an exchange about such things as special education legislation and what it means to their children. Doctors' names have been exchanged. They might learn about a new resource agency here."

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday sessions, for different groups, run roughly the school year, though newcomers are welcome and can be dovetailed into a class at any time.

St. Clare will follow up its open house with a Special Education Mass, at 11 a.m. Sunday, April 1, when students from the program will take an active part in the mass with readings, songs or musical instruments.

On the same day, two Community Living Centers open their doors for an open house from noon to 3 p.m. in cooperation with St. Clare's special mass, as well as in observance of National Mental Retardation Awareness Month.

Many of the Community Living Center residents are members of classes at St. Clare and participate in the Worship Together Services.

'Mame' comes to Mercy High

Sophomore Cathy Bonczak, (at left in the picture at right and below) plays the title role in "Mame," to be performed by Mercy High School students this weekend, March 16-18. Below, Miss Bonczak appears with Cyndi Phillips, who plays Vera Charles, the grande dame of the theater, and at right she teams up in a scene with Julie DePore, a junior who plays the role of Agnes. The dowdy Agnes is the nanny in charge of Mame's nephew, Patrick, and Julie's brother Paul will play the child's role. Curtain time for the 35 students on stage will be 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 7:30 p.m. Sunday. Tickets, at \$5 each, are available in the school on Eleven Mile and Middlebelt, and can be reserved by calling the school office, 476-8020. The Joseph Kesselring play was made famous on Broadway by Rosalind Russell and in Hollywood by Lucille Ball.

