

# Bureau changes with people's needs

By KAREN SUE HERMES

Four months after WXYZ-AM introduced its Action Bureau for Consumers, the recession struck the auto industry and the Big Three laid off thousands of metropolitan Detroit residents.

WXYZ quickly dropped "Consumers" from its action bureau's name and changed its emphasis from helping people deal with consumer problems to helping people cope with unemployment.

"You don't have a consumer problem when you don't have money to spend," said Jane Prescott of West Bloomfield, the bureau's director.

"The question was, 'Where's the big need now?' and the need was less for people who had money to spend and more for people who didn't."

NOW, THE bureau spends most of its time answering questions about how people can consolidate their bills, keep their car from being repossessed and work with mortgage and utility companies to pay less per month until they get their jobs back.

"We're not at all what we started out to be."

The bureau's emphasis, Ms. Prescott said, has been on people, rather than just consumer problems.

For example, it recently united three sisters who'd been separated by adoption 27 years ago and clothed the school-age daughters of a woman who'd been evicted from her home. It also sponsored a five-week weight loss program in which 335 participants lost 632 combined pounds.

Ms. Prescott, 48, was hired in September to head WXYZ's Action Bureau. It opened in January.

Based at WXYZ's Southfield office, the bureau receives 40 calls a day. Volunteers, who have files of resource materials, staff the phones.

From the calls, Ms. Prescott gleaned subjects for minute-long reports broadcast five to six times daily.

MOST RECENTLY, the bureau's received a number of calls from people who have been taken by clever con-men.

"Companies are promoting like crazy. There are too many coupons, too

many deals, too many contests. When people have too little money, they respond. They put their hopes on a chance."

Ms. Prescott grew up in Grand Rapids. She was graduated from Northwestern University in 1953 with hopes of becoming a lawyer.

Although she was accepted into

*"We're not just here to talk about the news, we're here to do something about it."*

— Jane Prescott

Northwestern's law school, her professors talked her out of attending. They told her she wouldn't get a job as an attorney because of her sex.

Ms. Prescott went into public relations instead, working from 1953 to 1955 for Michigan Bell Telephone and 1955 to 1956 for Butterworth Hospital, Grand Rapids.

She quit working fulltime in 1956 after giving birth to her first of three children.

In 1961, after moving to West Bloomfield, she began nine years of continuous volunteer work. During that time, she helped promote Meadow Brook and helped start Oakland University's Continuum Center, a women's counseling and guidance center.

In 1970, she began working as a consultant for Birmingham psychologist Sonya Friedman, the woman who later suggested WXYZ hire her for the action bureau directorship.

SHE SPENT the next six years traveling and speaking at women's seminars.

From 1977 until she signed on with the action bureau, Ms. Prescott worked as a public relations consultant for the Avon Corp. In the meantime, she earned her master's degree in educational psychology from Wayne State University.

Ms. Prescott sees the action bureau someday evolving into a resource cen-



When people don't have money to spend, they don't have consumer problems, acknowledges Jane Prescott, director of WXYZ-AM's former Action Bureau for Consumers. So when the recession hit Detroit,

the West Bloomfield resident dropped the word "consumer" from her bureau's title and directed its emphasis toward solving people's economic problems. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

ter for people who want to know the immediate impact of the day's breaking news.

On hand, she would keep telephone numbers and addresses for which callers could get more information. Michael Packer, operations manager

for the station, said the bureau goes hand-in-hand with the station's philosophy.

"We're not just here to talk about the news, we're here to do something about it."

## Festival concerts plentiful

The Montreux/Detroit International Jazz Festival will feature eight ticketed evening concerts, beginning with an Opening Night River Gala at 8 p.m. Thursday on the Boblo Boat.

A series of 40 free concerts has been scheduled at Hart Plaza and the Detroit Plaza Hotel as part of the festival during the Labor Day weekend.

## Down to the wire, politicians woo help

By KATHY PARRISH

L. Brooks Patterson is a "tough cookie" when dealing with "adult" theater owners.

That image crumbles a bit when he's passing a plate of cookies around to a group of Republican women.

At a candidate luncheon held recently by the Oakland County Council of Republican Women, the county prosecutor graciously strolled from table to table serving dessert.

Carrying a large glass plate loaded with tea cookies, he was introduced to party workers from Republican women's clubs in southern Oakland County.

"This is my Brooks," said one admirer to a tableful of party workers. "No, he's mine. I've been in love with him for years," joked another supporter.

"Unfortunately, there's enough of me to go around," soothed the prosecutor, patting his stomach.

For Patterson and other Republican candidates successful in the August primary, the luncheon was more than just social. It was a chance to recruit proven party workers who might carry them to victory in November.

"All of you are going to be asked to help in a campaign," Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy told the group.

"I want you to commit yourselves that when a candidate asks, you'll help. In no way can we do it ourselves."

MURPHY SAID volunteers who get the information out to voters are the ones who win the election.

"The Democratic Party, year after year, has to pay to get work done. They don't have the volunteers like we do."

"Money won't win it for you," he added. "You've got to be in there with your workers."

Called a victory luncheon for those who won the primary, the event in the Pleasant Ridge Community Center was also a kickoff for the November election.

Also on hand to recruit workers were Bea Olmstead, running for state representative in the 69th District; James Stewart, challenging Sheriff Johannes Spreen; County Clerk Lynn D. Allen; Drain Commissioner George Kuhn; and Dorothy Webb, running for 18th District county commissioner.

The candidates took the opportunity to inform workers where their campaign offices are and when their fundraisers will be.

Urging the workers to attend her upcoming fundraiser, Bea Olmstead said she isn't interested in just selling tickets.

"You add spirit. I hope you'll be there," she said.

JOKING WITH the 30 people there, Patterson said he doesn't intend to spend a lot of money on the campaign.

"Nov. 3 I'm going to arrest my opponent for indecent exposure," he said with a laugh.

Although pleased at his primary results, the prosecutor said he still needs help before the election.

"We're doing it right, but I can't do it alone. I can do the official party part, but the men in and women in the trenches lock it all in."

Joan Lindor, vice chairwoman of the Oakland County Republican Committee, encouraged attending each of those present to get five more people involved in the campaigns.

She said the party is running out of money at the county level because of the economy and rising expenses.

"The money isn't there this year to help the candidates. They need you."



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