

## Sports

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450

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## Monsters

They can be a help in conquering fear or they can be quite monstrous

By Lorraine McClish  
staff writer

**J**OYCE ALLERDING'S son had a monster under his bed every night for almost two years. And for all of those nights the preschooler woke up — sometimes five or six times a night — screaming with his nightmare.

"The fear of monsters is such a common part of childhood that almost everyone has a story to relate," the Farmington Hills woman said. "I was told that this fear is a normal part of childhood development that took place when imagination set in, between 4 and 7 years generally. I was told from child psychologists and from every book I read that the answer was to get him to open up

and talk about it. But Brad would not talk about it — at all.

"If this was a phase he was going through I was determined to do everything I could possibly do to speed up that phase so he could find some peace and we could get some sleep."

What Allering did was discover that the monster-fears were not only common, but healthy as well. And she got the answer to her dilemma by accident when she attended an at-home party for the sale of Discovery Toys.

"I wasn't even thinking about Brad's problem when I went to the party," she said. "I went to buy toys for the children. What I bought was a book called 'The Beast in the Bath-tub.' The first time I read it was the first time Brad talked about all of his anxieties."

Brad is now 5 and a happy kindergarten at Woodale Elementary School.

Allering is now an educational consultant for Discovery Toys and anxious to share her own two-year nightmare to help others.

"CHILDREN develop self-confidence by testing their limits," Allering said. "One important way they do this is by experiencing fear within the context of a situation they can control."

"With adults, psychologists have found that imagining an experience can be just as useful therapeutically as being in the real situation. The same is true for children. By approaching the scariest thing they can



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Joyce Allering shows examples of the good monsters and the bad monsters that are part of children's life today and talks

about how parents can help make the monster phase a healthy part of their growing up.

"This is the age when children begin to report nightmares," Allering said. "Not because they didn't have these kinds of dreams earlier, but because they finally have enough language and ideas to talk about them. And their fears are frequently personified as monsters or monster-like animals."

think of through fantasy play and surviving it, they begin to develop the skills they will need as adults."

Psychologists also tell us there is a link between fear and the various stages of early childhood development.

For example, babies begin to recognize themselves as individual beings distinct from their mothers at about the age of 5-6 months, projecting human feelings onto the inanimate object, turning the lawn cutting device into a creature bent on attacking them.

It is about age 4, when imaginations become more fully developed, that the fear of monsters and fantasy creatures begins to really take hold.

"The ability to imagine what isn't there is a child's gateway to an expanded potential for learning. But it is also the potential for opening up a virtual Pandora's box of anxieties."

"The challenge for parents is to keep the two in balance," Allering said, who offers some suggestions as to how this can be done.

"Remember that the line between fantasy and reality is often blurred for a 4-year-old. Literally anything — songs, stories, television, a picture on a box of cereal, somebody else's toys — can be the start of his or her own monster in the closet."

"Talking to children about their fear goes a long way toward alleviating, or at least controlling, the problem. Combining the discussions with something pleasant like reading a story is very effective. Brad's fear left him completely when he started to talk about 'The Beast in the Bath-tub.'"

"Four-year-olds are just beginning to discover aggression. By projecting this type of behavior onto an imaginary monster, they can begin to learn about and deal with this powerful and potentially overwhelming emotion in an acceptable context."

"While children need to be able to practice fear, they also need to be able to quit if the situation becomes too scary. Fantasizing with monster toys gives children a creative way to express their anxieties and retain control at the same time."

AS AN EDUCATIONAL consultant for Discovery Toys, Allering has been trained to help parents help their children by choosing toys, games, puzzles, books that will aid them in getting smoothly through one stage of development into another.

"I give suggestions because that's the job, and I'm glad I'm able to do it," she said. "Most developmental stages are temporary, and that applies to type of monsters. It is something children will eventually outgrow."

"With a little love, a few well-chosen playthings — some monster toys are really monstrous, some are good; watching the television programs the children watch — Sesame Street handles the fear very well with The Cookie Monster — children can learn to relegate their monsters to the fantasy world."

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—Joyce Allering

## Long-term health care

### Alternatives sought for what's becoming a runaway problem

**L**ONG-TERM HEALTH care is a major issue on the agenda of the 101st Congress as well as the prime purpose for the formation of a coalition of associations concerned about the burden a long-term illness puts upon American families.

Facts and figures on what is involved in long-term care, whether at home, in a hospital or a nursing home, will be spelled out by Susan Rourke when she speaks at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 6, in Farmington Branch Library, State and Liberty streets.

Her talk is called "Options in Long Term Health Care."

Rourke, who has been the executive director of Citizens for Better Care since 1977, comes as the guest speaker for Farmington Chapter of Older Women's League.

The program is offered without charge in an effort to educate residents on the alternatives to what is now thought of as a runaway problem; the legislation that was passed to stem the problem but was never enforced; and legislation that is pending to help relieve the catastrophic costs in long term health care.

Securing adequate long-term health care in 1989 is the major thrust for National OWL, a member of the Legislative Coalition on Long Term Care with The Alzheimer's Association, American Association of Retired Persons, American Nurses Association, Business and Professional Women-USA, Citizen Action, National Council of Senior Citizens, National Health Care Campaign, Paralyzed Veterans of America,

United Auto Workers, Veterans Advocacy Associates and AFSCME.

"MEDICARE is woefully inadequate on this score, which is why so many of us are concerned," said Virginia Nicoll, a member of Farmington OWL and president of Michigan OWL. "Government reports show that Medicare paid less than 2 percent of all nursing home bills and just 12 percent of all home health bills last year."

According to the Federal Task Force on long-term-care Insurance Medicare imposes limits on the use of home health care as well. Care can only be given to people who are home-bound, who need intermittent care and whose care needs are acute. Medicare will not pay for full-time nursing care, homemaker or chore services, or custodial or personal care services.

"I have been asked to talk about the options, and I can tell you the options are few unless you have a great deal of money," Rourke said. "We worked very hard to get some major federal legislation passed last year. It was passed, but it was never followed up. Now we have several more bills pending. What we have to do is look at where we stand now, where we are going, where we want to go, and how we are going to make sure the dollars are waiting for us when we get there in need of long-term care."

Citizens for Better Care is a Michigan consumer advocacy organization concerned with the quality of care in nursing homes, homes for the aged, and boarding homes.

From its Detroit base the agency handled more than 900 complaints in

a three-month period from residents in those homes spreading over seven counties.

"If you believe the government's figures, Michigan is doing better than average, and that isn't great," Rourke said.

ROURKE HAS served in numerous capacities for a variety of health and mental health related boards, councils and commissions. She was a gubernatorial appointee to Michigan Statewide Health Coordinating Council and its chairperson for one term.

She was elected president of the National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform in 1988 and has trained advocates for the elderly in six states and the District of Columbia.

Major legislative proposals that have been introduced and will be reintroduced in the U.S. Congress

this spring on long-term care, sometimes known as catastrophic health care, come from U.S. Rep. Claude Pepper, D-Fla., Henry Waxman, D-Calif., and Pete Stark, D-Calif., and U.S. Sens. George Mitchell, D-Maine, and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass.

"We are not supporting one bill over another bill," Nicoll said, speaking of the Legislative Coalition on Long-Term Care. "There will soon be activities and deliberations in the special Bipartisan Commission on Long-Term Care authorized by last year's Catastrophic Health Care Legislation. We need to see where this commission is going and if it will report legislative recommendations that we can support."

"Our job now at the local level is to inform ourselves sufficiently so that we can know how we can go about getting access to long-term care for everybody."



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Citizens for Better Care

## Monthly Album begins Feb. 20

A new section devoted exclusively to the announcements of engagements and weddings will begin in the Livonia, Redford, Garden City, Westland and Farmington Observers Monday, Feb. 20. Called "Monthly Album," the addition to the newspaper will be published the third Monday of every month.

Engagement announcements will be accepted no later than 45 days prior to the wedding. Wedding announcements must be submitted

within 60 days after the wedding. All announcements are run on a space available, first-come, first-served basis.

Photographs submitted should be black and white glossy, preferably 5 x 7 inches, for the best reproduction. Color photos can be submitted — and will be accepted, but they do not reproduce as well.

Due to the volume of photographs submitted, the newspaper can not be responsible for any that may be lost

or damaged. Photographs mailed to the Livonia or Farmington office may be picked up in that office after publication, or they will be mailed back if the sender submits a self-addressed sufficiently stamped envelope when the wedding or engagement picture and information is received.

Photographs and story information pertinent to Livonia, Redford, Garden City and Westland should be sent to Sue Mason, Livonia Observer,

36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48180. Photographs and story information pertinent to Farmington and Farmington Hills should be sent to Lorraine McClish, Farmington Observer, 32303 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

Engagement and wedding forms may be picked up at either office during regular office hours.

Mason may be reached by calling 591-2300. McClish may be reached by calling 477-5450.