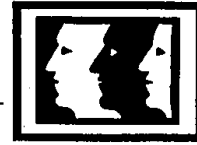


Suburban Life

Lorraine McElish editor/477-5450



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(F1C)

Alano

Where help is available morning, noon and night

By Sue Mason
staff writer

The mug rack seems to stretch on forever along the wall. Coffee cups of all shapes, sizes and colors hang in rows on numbered pegs, each representing a dues paying member of an elite club.

And each represents a commitment to a lifetime of sobriety.

The mug rack hangs in the Northwest Alano Club in Livonia which for 31 years has been providing social activities and support programs for recovering alcoholics. The number is a tribute to the power of word of mouth.

"I was sent here for the meetings; I found the club and stayed," said Randy Vartanian. "I stayed because I knew it was a matter of life or death."

On the verge of suicide and living in San Diego, the 32-year-old Canton Township resident called his brother. Within 24 hours he was in Michigan and after a few phone calls was in touch with the Northwest Alano Club.

He had drank for 15 years — and drank daily for 10 of those years — when he was introduced to the club in 1984. He was in and out over the next three years before finally joining.

"When I came in here, I knew what I had to do," he said. "I stuck out my hand and said 'Hi, I'm Randy and I need help.'"

HELP IS something Northwest Alano Club has plenty of. Housed in a wing of the former Perrinville School at Ann Arbor Trail and Farmington roads in Westland, it offers 16 Alcoholics Anonymous, three ALANON and two Adult Children of Alcoholics meetings

morning, noon and night seven days a week.

In addition, there's social activities like weekly dances, picnics, co-ed softball teams, pool and bowling leagues, lecture series, even a motorcycle club, the Sober Riders.

There is a membership limit of 800 and while it did get close to that figure, the club has about 675 active members currently, down from more than 700 because of the summer months.

For Christmas, Thanksgiving and New Year's, there's also thons — around-the-clock support meetings — and dinners.

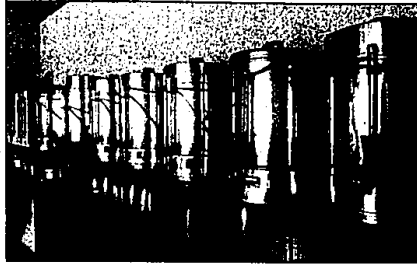
In many ways, the inside of the clubhouse resembles any other private club. There's a games room with video and pinball machines, billiard tables, card room, snack bar, TV room and library. The school's gym doubles as one of several meeting rooms and a dance hall for Saturday night get-togethers.

The club is open 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 9 a.m. to midnight Sunday. The snack bar serves up a fare that includes breakfast and lunch and dinner specials.

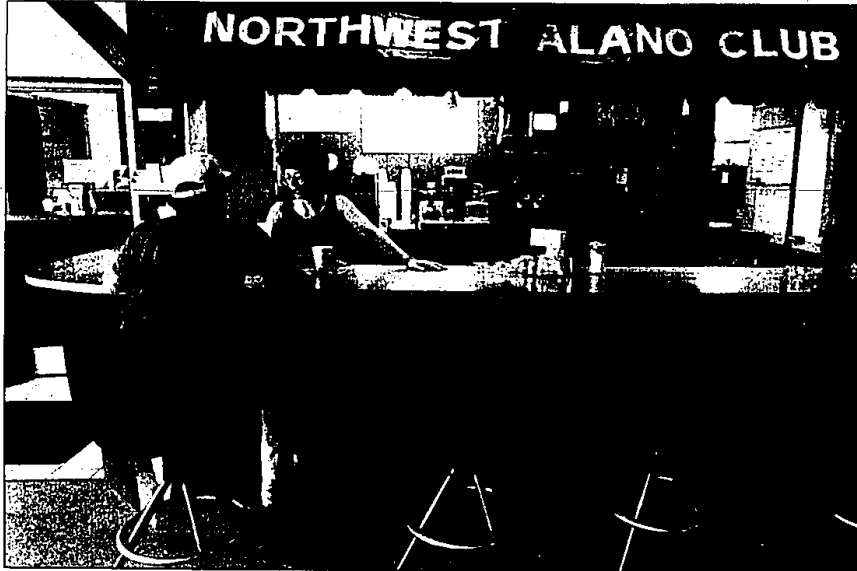
THE DUES run \$10 a month, but members can save money by paying \$50 or \$90 in advance for six months or one year respectively. One of the membership perks is coffee for 35 cents a cup.

Dues paying members also get their own numbered peg and receive special coffee cups marking five, 10 and 15 years of membership. Only one cup number has been retired, number one belonging to the late Bill Key who helped found the Northwest Alano Club.

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So much coffee is consumed by members that a complete wall of one meeting room is used for the storage of coffee urns and carafes.



JIM JAGFELD/staff photographer

Launa Lehr chats with Bob Lang at the snack bar in the Northwest Alano Club, the hub of day-to-day activities for its 675 members.

Animals pay a visit to their eye doctor

By Lynn VanDine Howard
special writer

When Dr. Dan Lorimer operates on his patients, they don't know that he's one of only 100 specialists in his field worldwide. They don't appreciate the delicacy of his work.

All they know is after he's done, they can see their tails when they chase them.

Lorimer is a veterinary ophthalmologist who works on 300 patients a month from all over the state. Dogs, cats, birds and even the occasional exotix, such as a rhinoceros or lion, are fair game (so to speak) for his specialized skills.

Clad in scrubs and mask, Lorimer hunches over his patient, an older cocker spaniel named Sam, peering through a microscope as he oh so delicately sutures tissue on an eye.

"I do one of these a week, sometimes two," he said as he works, his gaze riveted to the microscope.

He works 1 1/2 days a week at Bloom Animal Hospital in Livonia and five days a week at Michigan Veterinary Specialists in Bloomfield Hills. Lorimer also makes house (or stable) calls to horses at area race tracks and animals at the Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak.

IN ONE MONTH, he will see about 300 animals and birds, all referred by area veterinarians who feel vision problems from cataracts to glaucoma to eye injuries would be better treated through the delicate and demanding diagnostics and courses of treatment. Some referrals come from as far away as Milwaukee, he said.

"I think I'm the only veterinary ophthalmologist in southeast Michigan," said Lorimer, a graduate of Michigan State University's veteri-

'The cases that are referred to me are more complicated than can be treated in a general veterinary practice.'

— Dan Lorimer

nary school who interned in animal ophthalmology at the University of Arizona and at Stanford University. He has been practicing for the past four years.

"The majority of the animals I treat are dogs and cats," he said. "The cases that are referred to me are more complicated than can be treated in a general veterinary practice."

For instance, Lorimer performs "one-stitch" cataract surgery with ultrasounds, cyclotherapy, a freezing procedure for glaucoma, lens implants, and intraocular prosthesis placements.

Such procedures are not cheap, ranging in cost from \$200 to \$1,000, but they aren't as expensive as the equivalent in human surgeries, said Lorimer.

"Animal vision is very different from human vision; animals rely on night vision, periphery, the ability to see far away," he said. "Humans need to see things closer and in detail."

IT'S NOT always easy to detect vision problems in animals, according to Lorimer.

"Pets, especially those that stay inside, may stay in their home routines, and you can't tell," he explained. "But once they get outside and start running into things or mov-

ing very slowly, then you know you have a problem."

Vision-impaired pets may also fail to retrieve toys or show fear at being left alone.

When Phoebe lost her eyesight, she trailed behind the other Jack Russel Terriers owned by John Breckenridge of Farmington Hills.

"She would lag behind, she wouldn't play," said Breckenridge, adding that Phoebe earns \$4,000 a year as a breeding dog. "I figured with what she makes, after having 26 pups, she should see, too. I went to see Dr. Lorimer after my vet recommended him."

Phoebe has cataracts in her eyes, and Lorimer was able to treat her with surgery.

"I brought her in in the morning and took her home in the afternoon," recalls Breckenridge. "It's just amazing what he can do. She's a completely different dog. Now she hunts and runs in front of the other dogs, right where she belongs."

PHOEBE ALSO has resumed with real some of her other activities, her owner said. She plays soccer and water polo, lies on a raft in the pool and snoozes on command.

Lorimer grins when he talks about Phoebe.

"She has sunglasses she wears at the pool," he said. "Her owner brought a picture of that for me. She's something."

Lorimer said his interest in animal ophthalmology was sparked in veterinary school, where he met his wife, Dr. Laura Detellis, a veterinary cardiologist at Michigan Veterinary Specialists, one of only 50 such specialists in the world.

"It is a very gratifying line of work," said Lorimer. "Being able to help these animals is tremendously gratifying."



JIM JAGFELD/staff photographer

Visiting their ophthalmologist isn't anything new to Phoebe (at left) and Foster, Jack Russel terriers owned by Farmington Hills resident John Breckenridge. After cataract surgery,

Breckenridge says Phoebe hunts and runs in front of the other dogs, right where she belongs. Both dogs wear their sunglasses when they are playing in the family pool.