

# Day-long health conference looks at women's concerns

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

Women looking to improve their health will find they help they need at "A Call to Wellness — A Women's Healthy Agenda for the '90s."

The day-long conference will be Saturday, April 3, at the Waterman Center of Schoolcraft College, Livonia. This is the second year that Schoolcraft's Women's Resource Center and Health Service and Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus Womencenter in Farmington Hills have teamed up to sponsor the conference.

"I think it's kind of exciting to have a whole day where women's health is the focus," said Pat Briggs-Jones, director of OCC's Womencenter. "We're working on a theme of empowerment; we're trying to create an atmosphere where women are able to speak and be heard."

Picking up on the theme will be the keynote address by Sean Hogan-Downey. A licensed marriage and family therapist in private practice for more than 15 years, her subject will be "The Fairy Godmother is NOT Coming! Empowering Yourself."

It was a twist of fate that paired up the two Schoolcraft groups with OCC for the first conference in 1992. Swanborg had begun exploring the idea of a women's health conference the same month OCC's call to newspapers arrived on her desk.

Rather than "reinvent the wheel," Swanborg approached then Womencenter director Mary White about a co-sponsorship. White was "thrilled."

"It was like it was supposed to be," Swanborg said.

This year's conference will open with registration and coffee at 8:30 a.m., followed by the keynote address at 9:15 a.m. There will be three workshop sessions — 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 2:15-3:30 p.m. and 3:45-5 p.m. — and lunch 12:30-2 p.m.

## Pick and choose

Briggs-Jones and Nancy Swanborg, director of the Women's Resource Center, began working on the conference last fall, sending out a call to papers to those people interested in participating in the workshop. A committee helped to narrow the field to the 22 topics that will be covered.

"Of course, we had more workshops than time available," Briggs-Jones said. "Our final decision

was based partly on evaluations done at last year and then we talked among ourselves. We tried to address issues relevant to all age levels."

In fact, those evaluations prompted the second conference, according to Swanborg. "We asked if we should repeat the conference, on the evaluation, and got an overwhelming response of do it again," she said. "I would guess the potential is there (for an annual conference)."

Topics include "Thin at Any Price," an overview of eating disorders by Maril Egrin Stone of Affiliated Psychologists of Michigan; "After the Earthquake — Now What?" using personal support, dream work, meditation, prayer and introspection to discover dormant inner dreams with Sandy Baumann of Emerging Free, and "The Breast Cancer Epidemic: Creating an Environment for Change," an overview of existing data and prevention strategies by Joan D'Argo of Greenpeace International. There also will be at least 10 display tables about services available to women, including those provided through Womencenter and the Women's Resource Center.

## Two goals

"We have two goals for the conference, to provide information by covering all aspects of women's health and to provide a network for women, the kind of thing where women can come together and talk about the things that are important to us," Briggs-Jones said. "We're doing this because women's issues are so understudied... like breast cancer. It's the largest killer of women but it's not researched enough."

"We've made it affordable and designed it for any and every woman, to meet women's needs and for women to meet people in the community who are doing different things," added Swanborg. "We've made it so women can get some information they need in an anonymous way. We've discovered that's how women get their information initially."

Cost of the conference is \$20 at the door. For more information, call 462-4443.

Proceeds from the conference will be used for academic scholarships at OCC and Schoolcraft.

"I think it will be a really exciting conference and a good place for women to get together," Briggs-Jones said.

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# Fragile X Syndrome group meets

It is estimated that one in 850 people may carry the gene for Fragile X Syndrome, the most common inherited cause of mental impairment.

Of this group, about one in 1,250 males and one in 2,000 females are affected by the disorder. Despite its prevalence, Fragile X Syndrome was virtually unknown until the 1980s and the vast majority of cases are undiagnosed.

Families affected by Fragile X Syndrome may struggle for information on this little-known condition. A group, sponsored by the Fragile X Association of Michigan, meets at William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak offering information and support for families, health professionals, educa-

tors and other interested persons.

The group's next meeting is 7-9 p.m. Saturday, April 24, at William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, in the Administration Building - Conference dining rooms A and B.

For more information about the group, call Pam Linsdeau at 776-0090 or Carol Wingate at 777-9135.

Large ears, a long narrow face and large testicles are the three most common physical features of Fragile X Syndrome in adolescent and adult males. In young children, both male and female, physical characteristics may include flat feet, loose joints and frequent ear infections.

People with Fragile X Syndrome are often hypersensitive to their environment, and may feel overwhelmed by, sounds, sights, movements, touch, smells and tastes. Such individuals may have speech and language delays, autistic-like behavior, hyperactivity, learning disabilities, emotional and/or social problems.

Currently, there is no cure for Fragile X Syndrome, but there are treatments that have proven to be helpful. These include occupational, physical, speech and language therapy, music therapy, psychological treatment and educational techniques to help children cope with overstimulation in the school setting.

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