

# Seniors can get assistance from Samaritan Center support group



ROSE WEBER

"You are lonely; you have retired and feel at loose ends; you are concerned about the loss of a loved one; you have anxiety about the future; you need to talk things over with someone, you have a loss of life's meaning and purpose; you are facing changes; you want to find the 'gold' in the golden years."

You may have read this paragraph in your church bulletin or the newspaper and wondered what it meant or could mean for you.

"It is a senior citizen's support group designed to help seniors help themselves and each other," explained the group leader, Jean McAllister. McAllister is a former clinical social worker in the mental health department of a local hospital, a church elder, part-time therapist at the Samaritan Counseling Center in Farmington Hills and an "active retiree and senior citizen."

McAllister believes there are a lot of strong older people who are coping very well with their life situations who can help support others who need assistance.

"It is very helpful to those in stress to see a survivor, someone who has learned to cope. The hardest thing is thinking you're the only one in the world with this problem," McAllister said.

She sees the group as a chance for seniors to support each other by sharing their experiences as a group. She believes relationships are important to helping adjust to change.

"Seniors have a lot of changes. Sometimes as in the case of death or divorce, the changes come all at once. Decisions on housing, limited finances, how to use their retirement or solitary time, problems with children or grandchildren and caregiving to other members of their family, when shared with others become less burdensome," she said.

The support group is open to both men and women, single, divorced, widowed or married. Sessions will be facilitated by McAllister. She will not give formal lectures but will share information gained from her educational and work background as well as her own life experiences.

"I expect them to have a lot to give each other. Some have been in private counseling and have progressed to the point of a healthy person coping with a problem. That can be very beneficial to others," McAllister said.

It was obvious during the session I attended that situations can be different (widowed, recently divorced and health problems were represented) and each still gains insights from the others. Some recognized feelings expressed by another as similar to their own situation and shared ways of coping.

McAllister reassured the group that all sharing of experiences was strictly voluntary. "You can say as much or as little as you like. And it is okay to cry."

The conversation was sometimes slow with long pauses between exchanges, but no one seemed to feel uncomfortable with the silences. It was not all solemn and sad. Little bursts of humor with accompanying smiles and laughs helped continue the exchanges.

McAllister said she didn't know exactly what direction the sessions would take, but she hoped her philosophy about the "golden years" would provide inspiration.

"I believe people should be able to feel good about the later years. They should move out and grow, take advantage of what is available to them, and have a good time. There are lots of good opportunities and possibilities for older folks," she said.

The support group is a project of the Samaritan Counseling Center in the Nardin Park United Methodist Church, on 11 Mile Road west of Middlebelt Road in Farmington Hills.

The center offers both individual and group counseling and workshops on such subjects as preparation for marriage, co-dependency and grief.

The senior support group will meet Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. in the Nardin Park Church Parlor. There is a small fee per session. For more information you may call the Samaritan Counseling Center at 474-4701.

The center is a church-related, non-profit, accredited counseling center supported by many denominations and individuals. Staff counselors are trained in both theology and psychology.

Rose Weber is a freelance writer covering items of interest to and about seniors. You may leave a message for her, from a touch-tone phone, by calling 953-2047, Ext. 1887, or write the Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.



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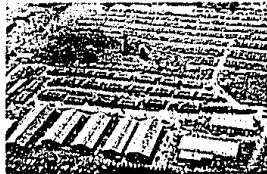
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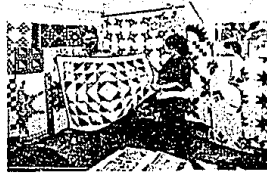
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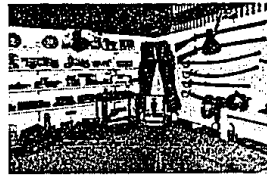
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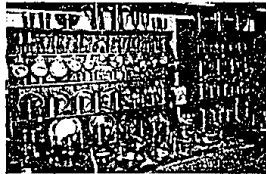
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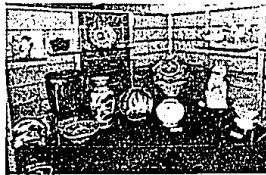
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## Resident on national board



Barbara Nederlander: Planning fund-raiser.

Barbara Nederlander of Bloomfield Hills has been appointed to the national board of directors of the American Automobile Related Diseases Association.

Nederlander, a local businesswoman, recently was elected vice chairman of the AARDA, headquartered in Detroit. She serves as chairwoman of the AARDA National Resource Development Committee, which is planning the first major fund-raiser for the organization, opening night of "The Will Rogers Folies" on June 1 at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit.

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