

# Friedman prompts women to reach out, take charge

By VALERIE OLANDER  
STAFF WRITER

Sonya Friedman, in a motivational, powerful and often humorous speech at the Birmingham Theatre Saturday, told the 800 gathered for the For Women Only seminar to "Stand up. Grow up. And really be women."

"You want men to be more sensitive... Then rise out of second-hand citizenship and sit down at the seats of power making," the celebrity psychologist and author urged her audience.

Friedman noted the absence of women at the signing of the Israel-Palestinian peace agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). She also took several stabs at men, including a story that caused her to write her first book 10 years ago, "Men are Just Desserts." A new book, "Secret Loves, Women with Two Lives," is expected on bookstore shelves in January.

After wincing at the word "obey" during the wedding ceremony of her husband's female co-worker, "the minister said 'and the two of you will become one' and I realized then that the one is him," Friedman said.

She also balanced her comments by claiming that men were responsible for most of the rights women have today. She named Alfred Charles Kinsey, who wrote about women being sexual beings, and Dr. Gregory Pinkus, who created birth control pills, with "separating sex from procreation."

"It was men who gave us the right to vote. And how many of us have used it," she questioned.

## Give of yourself

The Detroit mayoral race, city-suburban relations and youth violence were among other subjects

she touched upon, calling for women to reach out, get involved and "give something beyond yourself."

Friedman, who has a live one-hour television program on CNN, received a standing ovation from her audience.

But the celebrity psychologist wasn't the only attraction at the free For Women Only seminar, sponsored by Troy-based Lifetime Planning, a financial and retirement planning service, and the Birmingham-Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce.

Many of the women in attendance, most of whom were over 60 and divorced or widowed, also wanted to learn about financial planning, health care issues and any other useful information they can apply to their daily lives.

Some interesting statistics given by the Lifetime Planning counseling auditors:

■ The average yearly income of retired women is \$6,100 including both Social Security and pension.

■ Women will receive different information from financial planners. In a study of 32 men and women with the same amount of money to invest, 25 percent of the financial planners didn't ask the women their age, though all the men were asked. In addition, 60 percent of the females were not given information on retirement, though all the men were.

■ The average age a woman becomes a widow is 56 and 90 percent will never re-marry.

■ The majority of women who work full time, then quit during their marriage to raise children, claim they lose their decision-making powers.

A Bloomfield Hills resident, who has been widowed for six years, said she came to the women's seminar for the financial

planning aspect of it. Although a businesswoman for several years and aware of where she stood financially when her husband died, she said she is still groping with financial issues.

"Being alone I'm concerned about the future," she said.

## Why they came

Darcie Shackelford of Dearborn had heard about the seminar from a divorce support group based in Southfield. Acknowledging that lifetime planning wasn't the reason she came to the seminar, it was "certainly of interest."

Troy resident Susan Drake, 29, looked a bit out of place with the older audience. She, like many women there, wanted to see Sonya Friedman.

"My mother's a financial planner, so I grew up with that. I can do it on my own, but I'm from a different generation. This is probably very good for the older



Sonya Friedman (crowd). It's important for them to see this can happen to them," she said, referring to a woman featured on Kelly & Co. last week who had no idea about her personal finances when her husband died.

The woman had never even written a check prior to the husband's death. Although the woman was left with quite a bit of money, she invested poorly, first in an antique business that she knew nothing about and later in a bar after being influenced by a man she was dating. The woman lost about \$200,000.

Financial planners Roger Hammer and Larry Slabotzky gave a short presentation on finances and verified by asking for a show of hands that many of the women, about 80 percent, had no idea about how the stock market operates.

"With the tax laws changing, the interest rates changing, I encourage you to find someone you can trust," Slabotzky told the audience, all of whom were given the opportunity for a free consultation.

Hammer added: "Our parents just took their money to the bank

on the corner and hoped for the best. You can't do that today. The interest rates at banks are only 2.5 to 3 percent."

Other speakers included Dr. Rosalind Griffin of the Department of Psychiatry at Sinai Hospital, who advised women how to find a doctor after their family doctor has retired, moved away or died. She also promoted Sinai's Walking Well program for women coping with a death, stress, job change, infidelity or depression.

Lifetime Planning members also made a presentation touting the trips it sponsors for women alone, many of whom don't travel because they don't have a companion or fear their safety when traveling alone to a new place. In January a Caribbean cruise is planned; in May, a garden and castle tour of the British Isles; and in September a fall color tour of the northeastern United States and Canada.

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