

SUBURBAN LIFE

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THURSDAY, MAY 19, 1994



LAURA COLLINS

Celebrating 25 years

The Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year with some special events, including a spring showcase and a fall fashion show and luncheon.

The Celebration Showcase is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 22 at the center.

The family oriented festival will feature the talents of students and instructors from many of the performing arts, fine arts, crafts and other classes held at the non-profit center.

Performances and demonstrations will be held outdoors, weather permitting, and blankets are suggested for lawn seating.

An art exhibit and other events will be indoors. Admission is free.

New direction

In addition to this milestone, Ben Marks recently became the center's new executive director. A prominent retired businessman and former mayor of Farmington Hills, Marks has a vision for The Community Center as it approaches the 21st Century.

The Community Center is located in the historic "Longacre House," a 20-room Georgian mansion on five acres of wooded and landscaped grounds at 24705 Farmington Road, north of 10 Mile Road.

The center's Volunteer Guild will sell refreshments, as well as the "Goodenough Cookbook," throughout the day.

The popular cookbook, now in its fourth printing, was compiled by the Volunteer Guild and features recipes from congressmen, senators, representatives, Paula Blanchard, Ernie Harwell, and other famous, and not so famous, folks.

Another event in celebration of the 25th anniversary is Cultural Harmony, which is a series of performances highlighting different ethnic groups beginning in mid-July for five weeks. The program will feature dance, storytelling and music.

Something for everyone

The center is an independent, non-profit, historic facility offering a broad range of fine and performing arts events, educational and cultural programs, rental services and social activities.

Our mission is to serve as a unifying force in a rapidly changing area by bringing people together for a greater sense of community and by enriching their lives through quality programming. The center is truly a community-based, independent organization that does not receive any local, state or federal tax dollars.

The Community Center has been in continual operation since 1969. It is governed by a volunteer board of directors responsible for the long-range planning, policy setting and fiscal responsibility of the organization.

Rich beginnings

Our facility originated as a six-room Victorian brick home built in 1869 by Palmer Sherman. Luman Goodenough bought it in 1916, and later had it remodeled and expanded to its present size. He named it the "Longacre House" because of the property's shape.

In 1968, after the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Goodenough, the family donated the house and grounds to the residents of the area to be used as a non-profit community center.

Dedicated citizens raised the money needed for the initial restoration and operating expenses. An executive director was appointed, several craft classes and dance lessons were scheduled, and the center opened its doors to the public for the first time in September 1969.

In 1979, the Michigan Historical Commission designated the "Longacre House" a state historical site. Responding to the needs and interests of the community, the center gradually expanded its programming and staff.

Changes made

In 1987, a feasibility study conducted by Plante & Moran recommended making certain physical improvements in order to increase rental income. Consequently, we conducted a \$220,000 capital fund drive to finance a major renovation of the kitchen and reception areas, plus the construction of an outdoor amphitheater. These projects were successfully completed about three years ago.

The center is continually adapting to meet the changing needs of society.

Varied classes

With so many women working outside the home, we have scheduled more evening classes and events. One-day workshops are offered to accommodate busy lifestyles; and in response to audience surveys, we have increased our fine and performing arts programming to make these kinds of programs more available in our geographic areas.

Laura Collins is the center's public relations coordinator.



BURNING DESIRE TO SPEND

■ A shopping spree that lasted a year and put an area woman in debt turned out to be the beginning of her recovery from overspending. She launched Michigan's first Debtor's Anonymous group.

BY DIANE GALE
STAFF WRITER

After a one year shopping frenzy of buying clothes and trips, Maureen depleted a \$60,000 bank account and ran her credit cards up \$12,000.

At the end of the living nightmare, Maureen said, she realized she had a problem with money.

"When the savings account was depleted I panicked," Maureen said. "That panic made me seek help."

She looked for a support group to join about five years ago and called the Self-Help Clearinghouse in Lansing, a statewide resource information center. But there wasn't a Debtor's Anonymous in Michigan. So, with the help of the clearinghouse, Maureen and another woman started Michigan's first chapter in June 1989.

"I definitely have a sense that over-spending and credit misuse is an increasing problem and there's an ever increasing need for support groups," said Sue Kollmeyer, resource specialist at Michigan Self-Help Clearinghouse.

"It used to be, years ago that we'd get a rare call and it is more common," Kollmeyer said. "Overspending, credit misuse and gambling, we're getting more calls than we've ever had and we're hearing from family members, also."

The local chapter of Debtor's Anonymous meets at a Botstford Hospital facility in Redford.

Anonymity is key

Part of what makes the program work is that the people remain anonymous, the woman said, asking

See SPENDING, 2C

Church builds, meets community needs

BY DIANE GALE
STAFF WRITER

A congregation once housed in a converted barn has been remodeled, as members of First Presbyterian Church in Farmington Hills prepared last month for the church's 40th anniversary.

There have been more changes at the church in the past few years than ever before.

When construction is complete on 16,800-square-foot addition, the one building will house the fellowship hall, classrooms and administration offices. A magnificent floor-to-ceiling stained glass window behind the altar was added in the church last year.

Before the stained glass window, the long church "had a bit of a feel of a bowling alley," the Rev. Brewster H. Gere, the church's pastor, said.

The church can withstand some changes, because it has a good history with a solid foundation of people active in the community, he added.

Previously, the historic Knox House - also known as the Kirby White House, which was moved just last year to Farmington Road and 10 Mile - served as a grandiose landmark for the church and was home to church offices and some activities.

"Because we're tucked down here in the property, some people didn't know the church, but they did know the house on the hill," Gere said, adding that it was only eight years ago that the converted barn was torn down.

In fact, many of the structural changes that

are going on now were slated to be completed in the late 1980s.

"This is God's timing," he said. "If it were human timing it would have been done 30 years ago. We are looking forward to having all our operations under one roof. When we were up the hill we were a little detached."

Beyond the bricks and mortar, the First Presbyterian Church is building a stronger community outreach program. With three former mayors as members - Bob McConnell, Jody Soronen and Earl Opperthauer - a sense of civic duty naturally developed.

Many other programs are under way, too. For instance, Ken Glide, longtime church member, founded the Samaritan Counseling Center at the church. After the Kirby White House was moved, the program was taken to Nardin Park.

Also, Gere is active with Neighborhood House, which helps people in need with housing and other services.

"We're looking to find new means of outreach in the community," Gere said, adding that the church also sponsors four food programs in Detroit and other communities. Also, teen-ages members have gone to various communities around the country to help build houses for the needy.

Marcia Howe, church historian, said: "It's significant that we've been in the community for this length of time and we see ourselves as a growing church in membership and activities."

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Rev. Brewster H. Gere