

Youth from page A5

husband were familiar with youth assistance and, because they are also foster parents, took part in the family education program.

"We learned a lot of things," Bresett said. But perhaps the most valuable was this: When a youngster says he or she doesn't care, that means they care very much."

Bresett and her husband at that time were foster parents to two girls, ages 8 and 8. The Bresetts have since adopted the girls, "and they're a joy," she said.

Bresett, who is also a part-time paid secretary for Orion Area Youth Assistance, said she also sees great value in the camp program. "I see real benefits from the camp experience," she said.

Marian Emery, a retired medical technician and chair of Clarkston Area Youth Assis-

tance, has been a volunteer for almost five years. "I wouldn't put this much time into something if I didn't think it was worth it," she said.

When it comes to efficiency, Emery is convinced youth assistance is invaluable. "It's a lot cheaper compared to what the courts spend once a youngster gets in trouble," she said.

Youth Assistance's budget for 1996 is about \$4 million, according to county records. Of that, about \$2 million comes from probate court, \$1 million from school districts and municipalities and \$1 million from private contributions.

Joseph A. Svoke of Farmington Hills got involved in youth assistance about three years ago while he was on the Farmington Public School District's board of education.

"I saw what youth assistance was doing, and I sort of got excit-

ed," he said. Now he's chair of the Farmington Youth Assistance board of directors. "We're very pro-active and we have a good success rate," he said. "It's fun being with people with a common interest and a common goal."

Waggner, the stock broker, said he really enjoys the annual youth recognition dinner in Troy. "Kids who get straight 'A's, or who are good in athletics always get recognition," he said.

"We recognize kids for doing the right thing," he said. "I get a kick out of that."

Dudley, the psychologist from Southfield, said youth assistance is able to muster resources that might not otherwise be available. To illustrate, she cited the incident involving a youngster involved in retail fraud.

"He didn't actually steal anything," she said. "But he bought several items at a store, and the

clerk — an accomplice — charged him for everything but a coat."

When his mother learned of the theft, she was furious. "She hadn't raised him to steal," said Dudley.

After the mother went to youth assistance, the youngster took the coat back and acknowledged how he literally stole it, she said. "He learned this was not acceptable behavior," Dudley continued. "He had to do 60

hours of community service, and he learned a lesson."

Equally important, she said, the youngster never became part of the legal system.

Norm Quina, athletic director for Bloomfield schools in addition to being chair of youth services, noted that all dealings with youngsters and their families are confidential. "Even if a youngster is referred to youth assistance for substance abuse," he said.

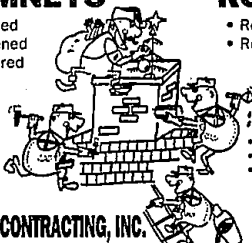
That involvement, he said, usually leads to an increase in self esteem for the youngster. "Sometimes we provide scholarships as a youngster can attend a sports camp (on soccer, for example). They get the benefit of solid adult leadership and they feel good about themselves," he said.

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