

Later life brings challenges, changes

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series on life changes and how they can be handled.

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Nurturing parents who've seen their children's struggles rewarded with acceptance to college or the prospect of a good career are sometimes caught in the middle: They still need to support their grown children with financial backing and their own parents, who may have health problems.

"Depending on the financial situation, their older parents may need them," May said. "More often, there is a feeling of guilt or responsibility by the children. They will think they should visit more, that kind of thing."

But for many even in their 70s, there is a quality of life and independence that their 50-year-old children may not understand.

"They (elderly parents) don't necessarily like their children telling them what to do," May said.

And even if there is no conflict with their older parents, empty nesters may find they didn't plan well for at least one contingency — that their college-educated children would come back to live with them.

"Usually the kids see it as temporary," she said. "If they work at all, they think they eventually will be on their own. If they don't get a job out of college, they can get into a depressive slump."

The other surprise to many couples who fondly waive goodbye to their college-bound children, is how difficult it is now to be a couple again.

"People who have nurtured that relationship and taken time to go out together for a weekend here or there adjust better," May said. "But some have told me they are surprised by the amount of freedom they have."

At the same time, some physi-

cal realities set in.

"They see extra lines in their faces, they worry about their weight, and gray hair," May said. "So they have plenty of challenges. And with paying for college for their children, they may have reason for the gray hair."

No clock, no kids, no cash

You've planned your retirement, at least financially, but now you realize that the best laid plans of the most dedicated golfer can fall into a sand trap or a money pit.

And with many companies offering early retirement, even at age 50, it's something that should be seen as an opportunity. But with downsizing, the buyouts sometimes come at a time before most have planned or saved enough for retirement.

"You have to ask yourself, 'What would be positive about this situation?'" May said. "Don't look at it as a horrible negative. You could see it as a time to pursue a passion or maybe a second career."

That change of attitude can be a stretch for a generation that has been touched by the Great Depression and a World War.

"Society rewards people for accomplishments and recognizes them that way," said Sandra Plummer, Botsford General Hospital's geropsychiatry program director. "Retirement can mean a loss of the familiar."

Work has been a source of identity, Plummer said, especially for men who were the main bread winner.

Women who have stayed at home for part or much of their lives, are not as likely to have the same difficulty making the transition to retirement.

But for all retirees, it's important for a sense of well-being to start with an attitude and a plan.

"Some people are looking forward to retirement as a time when they don't have to do anything," she said. "But they soon

find that they have some sense that they want to be needed."

One of the best ways retirees can fill that void and remain socially active is through volunteer work, particularly with their peers.

"It helps them avoid the attitude that retirement represents 'the end of the line,'" Plummer said. "Botsford has a superb volunteer corps. Like employees, they take their jobs very seriously."

In European countries, work represents more of a means to an end and the intellectual life of the individual takes on more importance, she said. Americans, for all their pragmatism, can see work as too large a part of their identity.

One way in which senior citizens maintain strong family identities is through their grand children, Plummer said.

"I definitely think that's something we lose by our geographic separation," she said.

As women continue to excel in their careers, often in two-income families, not only is there the stress for them as young mothers, but they will likely face the same job identity crisis their fathers have when they retire.

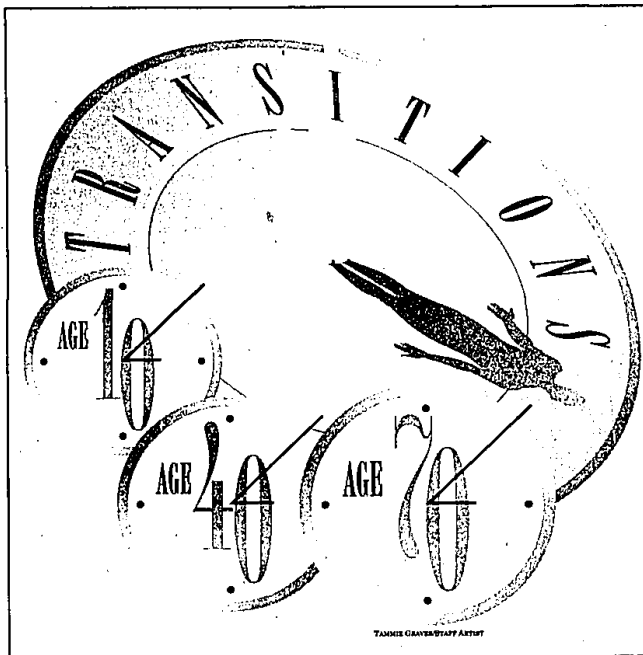
"But most people that are older come to terms with their lives," Plummer said. "They take advantage of the opportunity to do something new, to go to school part time, try a business at home or do something creative."

Left behind and alone

Even for the well-adjusted retiree, there is the likelihood that a partner will die, leaving the survivor alone.

"Sometimes we get people who are new to the area or newly retired," said Loretta Conway, director of senior programming for the City of Farmington Hills. "But we also get people who have been retired a long time and were recently widowed."

Conway said it is difficult for a



widow to make the adjustment from spending time with a lifelong partner and then suddenly finding herself alone, with few of her own friends and interests. "Some are hesitant and afraid, because they were always a couple," Conway said. "But it's one of the most satisfying things to see when they do come. It makes a real difference."

Seniors can come to the

Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile and take part in exercise, dance classes, bridge, art and any number of other activities.

The society can be a life saver, Conway said.

"We've even had children come from out of town to see their widowed father wasting away and get him to join our group," she said. "He came to a dance, met a lady and they eventually mar-

ried. He never came back, but that's OK."

Although everyone goes through those and similar changes, we can't fool ourselves into thinking they don't affect us, May said.

"If you have the attitude that you are not going to let the situation rule you, then you can handle change," she said.

Cities, schools vow renewed war on drug, alcohol abuse

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

City and school officials said they'll redouble efforts to fight teen drug and alcohol abuse after national reports indicate use is up.

"Yes the pendulum is swinging again and we know it and sense it," said Estralee Michaelson, coordinator of the district's Family Life curriculum.

Michaelson updated both Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils and Farmington Public Schools officials during their annual joint meeting Thursday. She didn't mince words.

"Now is not the time to curtail our efforts," Michaelson said. "We can't afford to be silent."

City officials agreed. Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and Farmington Mayor Jo Anne McShane suggested both city managers and superintendent look at new long-term strategies. "Anything we can do to reverse the trend is for the good,"

Vagnozzi said.

Several education programs are combating the trend already most notably Farmington Families in Action.

Kids are receiving mixed messages on drugs, alcohol and smoking. Films, music and other media are depicting the use of illicit drugs and alcohol more frequently.

Another problem is complacency, Michaelson said.

One suggestion is to get local control on enforcement of tobacco ordinances.

Laws already address teenage drug, alcohol and tobacco use, City Manager Frank Lauhoff said. The problem is the justice system doesn't also take the offenses as seriously as the community does.

"Nothing is going to happen until what the police are doing and what your teachers are doing are enforced all the way through the criminal justice system," Lauhoff said. "Otherwise it's a joke."

One suggestion was to invite

judges to a future joint city/schools meeting to question them about sentencing and similar issues.

Farmington Mayor Jo Anne McShane said the problem starts with families, but schools can help intervene.

"I don't think some of the teachers know how to confront these issues," McShane said. "They see a child on alcohol in the back of the classroom: What do you do?"

"I understand these kids just sit there all day sleeping."

Hills councilwoman Vicki Barnett said a "scared-straight" program would show kids the criminal element involved in drug and alcohol use.

Instead of going after kids, Hills councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio would like to see police go after stores that sell cigarettes to minors.

"Unfortunately, my oldest two boys smoke and I've been trying to get out of them the different places where they got them," Oliverio said.



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She asked the district keep school laboratories open when baseball and soccer games take place in the early evening.

"The kids there need to use the restroom and nothing is available," Oliverio said. "I was lucky to have boys and I able to send them off to the bushes..."

The request isn't unreasonable, Hills councilwoman Vicki Barnett said. As former president of the Northwest Farmington Baseball Association, Ellis added he received a "dozen calls" a year on the issue.

Safety needs to be considered, Superintendent Bob Maxfield said. Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said restroom facilities at Shiawassee Park have been vandalized in the past.

"We value community use of our facilities... We'll see if we can address this before the baseball season," Maxfield said.

District officials said they are responding to complaints about busing.

Barnett said she's received plenty of calls from neighbors

AGENDAS

Farmington Hills City Council

City Hall, 474-6115
Regular meeting
Council chambers
7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 10

Agenda items include:
■ Consider the approval of an agreement with Optimum Development Co. for the house located in the floodplain, lot 46, on Geraldine Street.

■ Consider confirmation of entering into a consent judgment agreement between the City of Farmington Hills and Oakwood Hills LLC for the Power Road development.

■ Consider approval of appointments to various boards and commissions.

■ Status of the proposed dredging of Danvers Pond.

■ Consider approval of a policy regarding political activities taking place in city-owned buildings.

■ Consider adoption of a resolution approving changes to the city's purchasing policy and procedures.

■ Consider adopting a policy regarding the taping and replaying of city council meetings.