

# Author suggests ways to put the 'we' in family

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Building family unity isn't easy in today's rapid-paced society. But, solutions could be as simple as talking, walking or just doing things together.

That could mean including words "us," "we" and "our." It could mean being sure to talk about family "firsts" and even putting up a bulletin board to chronicle such events. It could mean letting every family member have a crack at a timely topic during dinner. It could mean unplugging the television set and playing a game of checkers. Or, if the TV stays on, making it a weekly ritual to perhaps make popcorn and watch a movie as a family.

Those kinds of tips were offered to an audience of about 176 by published author Chick Moorman, who presented "Building Family Solidarity" Wednesday at the North Farmington High School auditorium.

"I'm going to show you a bunch of ways to glue and stitch things together and keep them strong," said Moorman, whose appearance was made possible by a grant from Farmington Area Youth and Family Services, in conjunction with Farmington Public Schools' PTA Council.

Walking back and forth in front of the audience, made up of parents and some children, the Saginaw resident mixed humor along with his poignant message. He emphasized the importance of establishing family rituals, no matter how nonsensical.

Moorman delved into one of his. Whenever he goes to the movies with family members, and the film company's logo appears on the screen, be it the MGM lion or Universal globe, he tells his movie comrades "I've already seen this one."

That routine apparently is being passed down. Moorman said he recently heard his teenage son, Matt, deliver the same line to his girlfriend while watching a video.

Another story was about how a family begins its annual summer vacation by going to a Michigan



Chick Moorman

lake, looking for turtles. Two children began the "ritual" by telling relatives they saw the biggest turtle ever. The shelled reptile was nowhere to be seen, of course, when the rest of the family scrambled down to the water.

"The turtle was not there," Moorman said. "And everybody got pushed into the water off the docks. Now, every year, their vacation doesn't officially start until they go down to look for the turtles and get pushed into the water. That kind of stuff builds unity, connectedness. ... silly, stupid unimportant things like that."

## Pull the plug

Also a solidarity builder, Moorman emphasized, is making time for others in the family a top priority. One of the ways to do that on a more regular basis is turning off the television, with parents allowing children perhaps a couple hours of viewing per night.

"Let's cut to the chase," he said. "The single biggest thing you can do for family solidarity is to go like this ... click."

Moorman thrust out a hand and toggled his thumb to approximately turning off a TV remote control.

"To me, the biggest thing is, it prevents us from being together," he noted. "It's just there in a lot of homes. It takes a lot of

courage as a parent to say, 'Here are the limits.' And you have to give up some of this yourself."

Even though many families have busy schedules, with precious little opportunity for members to be at the same place at the same time, Moorman suggested togetherness can still happen.

One way is to go out to dinner and do "table topics," picking a stimulating subject and allowing everybody to give their thoughts on it. "Everybody gets a chance to talk and listen."

And as a result, become more unified as a family. Several audience members said Moorman's advice was both helpful and reassuring.

"I came here to make sure I'm on track," said Susan Walk of Farmington Hills, at the program with 6-month-old son Michael. She noted that Moorman's main message was "less TV time, more eye-to-eye contact with your kids, doing stuff together."

Farmington Hills resident Gary Lambert, who has children ages 10 and 8, cited the need for families to regularly reserve time for each other.

"Today's environment, with two working parents, time is the key ingredient we have less and less of," Lambert said. "It's hard to find more time. But take the time you do have and maximize it."

Barb Waldmann of Farmington Hills, who also has two children, wanted to attend the program because "I'm always interested in bringing my family closer together. And it's important that we grow together and learn to depend on each other."

Waldmann said the most useful tip of the evening was Moorman's segment about "debriefing," a term the speaker used for situations where parents and their children talk about experiences of the day, even those that are unpleasant — like a distressed young hockey player coming home after his winless team lost again.

"Make a negative into a positive ... and let us learn about each other," she said.

## Lions meet



Can-Am confab: Klaus Schirato, Riverside Lions Club president, exchanges greetings with Carole Kaulakian, Farmington Area Lions president, during a joint meeting of the Canadian and U.S. service organizations at the Botsford Inn Jan. 6. Farmington Lions will visit the Riverside group at its headquarters in Windsor, Ontario, in April.

## Attracting butterflies, hummingbirds talk set



Farmington Hills naturalist Joe Derek will present a program on "Attracting Butterflies and Hummingbirds to Your Garden" at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, at Wild Birds Unlimited of Farmington Hills.

Reservations are recommended. Save a spot by calling the store at 471-7334.

Wild Birds Unlimited, at

29405 W. 12 Mile at Middlebelt in the Rainbow Square shopping plaza, specializes in bird feeders and houses, seed, books and other nature items.

## Valentine's Mixer

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce invites members and friends to bring plenty of business cards to the Valentine's Day Mixer from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12, at TLC The Laser Center, 34405 W. 12 Mile Rd., Suite 154, Farmington Hills. Cost is \$5 for members in

advance; \$10 for guests or at the door. Call 474-3440 for details.

## New Rite Aid

Rite Aid recently celebrated the remodeling of its store at 25870 Middlebelt Road in Farmington Hills.

"We are very excited about the remodeling of this store in Farmington Hills," said Paul Toombs, Rite Aid market manager. "We are strongly committed to the community, and we look forward to serving the needs of the residents here."

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2/16	Lakeside-Conf. Rm. A-2	Dr. Rolin
2/19	Sterling Heights-2nd floor	Dr. Hamburger
	Ophthalmology waiting area	
2/24	Fairlane-(Lower level)-Conf. Rm. 1 & 2	Dr. Levine (6:30 p.m.)
2/25	Troy-2nd floor-Ophthalmology waiting area	Dr. Bogorad

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