

CHAT ROOM



Dick Carvell

## Helen Keller challenged Lions to help the blind

Lions Clubs International began in 1917 when Melvin Jones of Chicago was able to persuade a number of small service clubs to unite under the label of Lions. In this manner the small groups would be able to act as one for a common cause.

At an early national convention Helen Keller challenged the young Lions to work for the blind and the deaf. The Lions picked up the challenge to help the blind but it was many years later before the Lions picked up the deaf portion of that challenge.

The Lions started in the Chicago area and within 10 years had covered the United States. When a Detroit Lions Club was able to sell a group of Windsor businessmen to join the Lions became international. Today Lions are 1.4 million strong and are located in 180 countries or geographic locations.

The Farmington area Lions were chartered in May 1947 with the late Dr. Herbert Viergutz as the driving force backed up by the Detroit University Lions Club.

During the past 59 years the local Lions have furnished eyeglasses to the needy, supported many local activities. As time has passed, they have joined with the 50 plus clubs in Oakland and Macomb counties to support

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# Senex gives seniors loving care

■ Socialization for homebound seniors, respite for caregivers, is at the heart of this local program.



BY MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER

Medi Crofoot was looking for something constructive to do with her time when she moved from Virginia to Farmington a year ago.

"I saw on television that the Senex program wanted volunteers," said Crofoot, a native of the Philippines. She picked up the phone and dialed the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills, which houses the daycare program for frail older adults.

"There's nothing to do at home. I might as well do something useful," Crofoot thought.

She now volunteers three days a week and loves it.

"The seniors are very nice, not demanding at all. And the other volunteers are lovely to work with," she said.

Her sentiments echo again and again - by staff, volunteers, and senior participants - during a recent visit to the center.

The Senex day usually begins with morning coffee hour and discussion of current events.

By mid-morning, men and women gently bond and stretch as part of a daily exercise routine. Everyone works at their own pace. There is no pressure to perform.

This day the group is burning off potential calories from Valentine's heart shaped candy that rest on tables in front of them, uncut as yet.

When the session ends, they walk, some with the aid of walkers or canes, one in a wheelchair, down a hall to a spacious lunchroom where a professional organist waits at a piano. Volunteers pass out songbooks for a sing-along that features "Down By the Old Mill Stream" and "Bill Bailey Won't You Please Come Home."

Senex programs range from art enrichment to Tai Chi, to visits by speakers such as city naturalist Joe Derek, and parties for every occasion. Card games, craft making and swimming pool activities are also available.

"Last August, we expanded the program from three to five days a week," said April Ayers, the Senex coordinator since last May. "It gives (clients) socialization as well as their caregivers respite time."

Twenty-five seniors are currently enrolled, but the program can accommodate more. An average of 10 to 12 seniors take part daily. Some come once a week, others two or three days. Half day sessions are also available. Rates vary.

The dual purpose is to give homebound seniors stimulating activities and companionship while at the same time giving their caregivers a break. Participants have ranged in age from the mid 60s to 98. The oldest current client is 95.

Farmington Hills city councilman Jerry Ellis told his wife, Mary, about the program last year. Mary's mother, Isabella Brimble, 86, lives with the couple. After some research, they decided to give it a try.

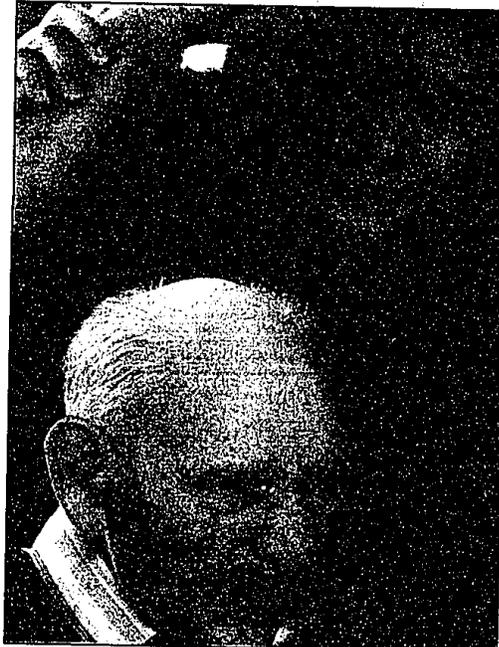
"Mom began going twice a week in October," said Mary Ellis. "She loves it. They keep her busy. It's good that she gets out with other people. All the volunteers are wonderful. It has been really good for her."

Ayers works with an assistant, Carmen Carfagno, hired last October, and about a dozen volunteers who do everything from helping out a few days a week to coming in once a week to play the piano, as Gus Borman does.

"I laugh myself silly here," said Jerry Sanfield, a client from Southfield, who is obviously enjoying himself. He has several volunteers and some visitors snickering, too.

John Clappison, Farmington born and raised, has been coming "quite a few years." Senex is 15 years old. Clap-

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STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH LAMBERT

Bond and stretch: Senex aide Carmen Carfagno helps Gene Bartlett during the exercise portion of the morning at the Costick Center in Farmington Hills. Senex is a daycare program for homebound seniors. There are currently openings available.

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