

Hearing impaired from page B1

realized then the critical nature of the intergenerational program."

Another essential element of the group services provided are the speakers who come in and educate deaf or hard of hearing seniors on topics such as Medicaid, Medicare, police protection or legal issues.

"Written materials are quite ineffective for the deaf because their language is a visual language, not a written language,"

said Booth. "They are translating into American Sign Language when they read, in their minds; in other words, they would hold the newspaper and their right hand would be signing while they're reading. Some of it can get mixed up in the translation, like with any other language. So it's not that they're illiterate, it's like they're a foreigner reading another language."

This conception of the deaf as a separate culture is a fact of

deaf life that Booth feels is highly important and often misunderstood.

Special language, culture

"We think of someone deaf as something that is broken and we have to fix it. And deaf people think of deaf as it's a special language and culture, a minority group; and let them be what they are," states Booth, pointing out that "to have a separate culture, you have to have a separate language, which they do. They intermarry. They have their own folklore and story telling that's handed down, not

in written form but in sign form. They meet all the requirements of any culture."

The interpreters for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Services are highly cognizant of deaf culture and become even more effective as they are immersed in the socialization process of the deaf.

For example, there are specific do's and don'ts of the deaf culture that have developed as distinct social mores. It's considered rude to break eye contact while talking with the deaf or to look away abruptly, as the deaf person will interpret that gesture as a signal that a sound has occurred, resulting in loss of attention to the conversation. Getting a deaf person's attention by tapping their shoulder is appropriate, but the tap must be

very light as the deaf are kinesthetically sensitive to touch. For the deaf, the four remaining senses are more acute to compensate for the loss of the hearing sense.

Booth describes a facet of deaf culture which may be difficult for the mainstream public to grasp — the deaf want their babies to be born deaf.

"Like any parents, they want that baby to be part of their culture. If somebody has a baby, one of the first things we ask is 'is it a boy or a girl?' In the deaf community, after the baby is born, they ask, 'is it deaf or hearing?', and if hearing, they say, 'oh, too bad.'"

The statistical likelihood of a deaf baby being born to deaf parents is low because in the majority of deaf marriages one spouse is usually born hearing and becomes deaf through illness, thus providing a genetic hearing link to future family members.

This is the case with Booth's maternal grandparents: her grandfather was born deaf and came from several generations of deaf members, while her grandmother was born hearing and became deaf at age 3 from spinal meningitis. All of their children and grandchildren are hearing.

Booth says that despite being born hearing, she considers herself "second generation deaf" and that she and her mother are "attitudinally deaf" by way of long-term and deep-rooted association with deaf culture.

"I am not deaf, but the attitudes I have with the deaf culture are there. We have people who became deaf later in life, when they're 50 or 60 years old and they are attitudinally hearing. They identify with the hearing culture. My mother was raised by deaf parents where there were no spoken words. So her primary language is American Sign and she translates when she hears English."

It was Booth's mother, May Booth, who started Deaf and Hearing Impaired Services Inc. over 40 years ago in the basement of her Redford home. The agency originally developed out of the need to assist her deaf parents and their friends whenever they needed an interpreter or other support.

Began work as a teen

Then known as the Michigan Association of Elderly Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Booth herself began working with her mother's agency as a young teen, making phone calls and interpreting. She went on to study deaf education at Wayne State University and did graduate work at Madonna University and Michigan State for a master's equivalent, taking over the agency upon her mother's retirement. By that time, it had grown to include several satellites which cover seven Michigan counties.

In 1997, Deaf and Hearing Impaired Services was selected as "Service Provider of the Year" from the Area Agency on Aging, an honor Booth feels strongly about as a reflection that deaf needs are now better met than they were in the past, and that the needs of the deaf are not only being recognized, but accepted.

The adaptation of American Sign Language is part of that progress — a language hundreds of years old which came over on the Mayflower and actually began in Europe. Despite the deep roots of ASL, up until 20 years ago it was considered imperative that the deaf child learn oral methods of communication — to lip-read and to speak — methods of communication that are as close to the hearing public as possible, but which are not as effective as American Sign Language, according to Booth.

Now, ASL is so widely accepted that the U.S. president uses an interpreter to translate each major speech he gives.

And it was in the winter of 1993 that then newly-elected President Clinton needed an interpreter to stand beside him during a speech at Michigan's Selfridge Air Base, and again a few years later at Ford Motor Co.'s celebration of the millionth Mustang.

On both occasions, Deaf and Hearing Impaired Services was contacted to interpret, and it was Booth who stood next to the president, signing his words. The experience was a heady one and she remembers many details — the security checks, waiting in the VIP room, the personable nature of President Clinton. Yet Booth wasn't nervous, despite being responsible for the detail and nuance of a presidential message being aired on CNN.

"I was doing my job," she states. "I just knew that I had people who needed to know what he was saying."

Deaf & Hearing Impaired Services Inc. of Farmington Hills is committed to providing the highest quality comprehensive services for deaf and hard of hearing older adults in southeast Michigan, while promoting their independence and dignity through cooperative efforts with other community based services.

For information about assistive devices for the deaf, support groups for hearing impaired or general information regarding deaf culture, call Deaf & Hearing Impaired Services Inc. at 473-1875 (TTY), or (248) 473-1888 or stop in the office at the Castick Center 9:30 to 4:30 Monday through Friday.

Chili cookoff time again

The Miss Farmington/Oakland County scholarship pageant along with Children Youth & Family Services will host the 6th annual Chili Cook Off Sunday, March 5, at Pages Food & Spirits.

Proceeds of the afternoon event will benefit the Governor Warner mansion and historical museum.

A panel of celebrity judges will taste and judge the entries. Entertainment and a raffle are planned. Miss Michigan Audrie Chermackas, also a former Miss Farmington, and founder of the chili cook off, will be a guest. Miss Farmington Leslie Reinbold will also be on hand.

Tickets are \$5 and will be available at the door. The ticket entitles you to vote for the People's Choice award, a free raffle ticket and complimentary soft drink. Children under 5 are admitted free.

Applications are available at the Farmington Chamber of Commerce or at Pages and the Pasta Stop.

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Farmington Public Schools will accept sealed bids for Track Resurfacing at Harrison High School until 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 22, 2000 at the Lewis Schumann Administration Center, 32500 Shawwassee, Farmington, Michigan 48336-2363, addressed to Paul Hein at which time they will be publicly opened and read for presentation to the Board of Education at their next regularly scheduled meeting. No oral, telephonic, telegraphic or facsimile proposals will be considered. The Board will not consider or accept a bid received after the time and date specified.

The Board of Education reserves the right to accept any item in the bid; to accept or reject any or all bids; to waive any informalities therein; or for reasons of establishing uniformity, to award the contract to other than the low bidder.

A bid bond for 5% of the bid amount issued by a carrier licensed by the State of Michigan and with an excellent or superior rating from AM Best Company must accompany your bid proposal. No certified checks accepted. Bid documents are available by calling the Bruce Lemons, RLA of Forstie Design, Inc. at (248) 647-7767. Bid documents may be viewed at FW Dodge Michigan Contractor & Builder and Construction Association of Michigan Plan Rooms.

LINDA K. ENDBERG, Secretary
Board of Education

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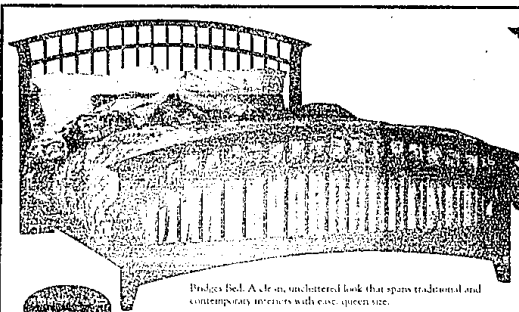
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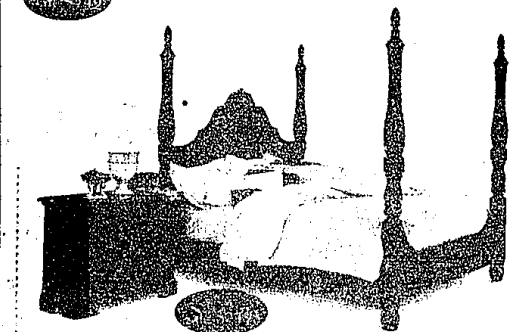
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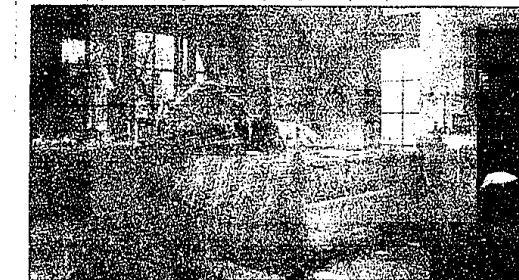
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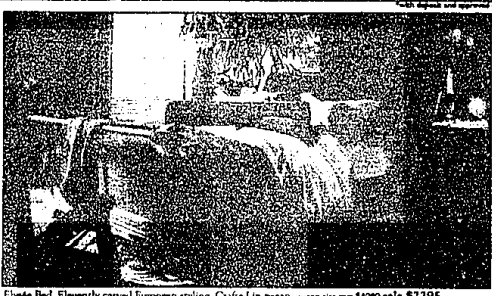
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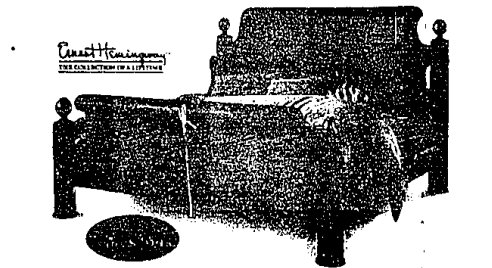
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