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CHAT ROOM



MARILYN SUTTLE

Siblings can learn to get over rivalry

In this corner, wearing the Pokemon T-shirt, weighing in at 37 pounds, Tommy the Terror. And in this corner, with a record of 36 and 4, his opponent and sister, Sara the Slasher Smith. Does this scene seem to play itself out in your living room too often?

Does it seem like you're always the person in the black-and-white striped shirt refereeing the match? Well, you are not alone. Parents of more than one child have been dealing with the frustrations of sibling rivalry since humankind began. Is it hopeless, then, to expect peace and harmony in our homes? Is the fantasy of our children growing up with a friendly, loving bond just another pipe dream? It's easy to get lost in these idealistic dreams of a happy family joyfully sitting around a peaceful dinner table enjoying pleasant conversation when... ding, ding, ding, round two begins. You're snapped back to the reality that your children have little hope for a peaceful co-existence. Well, fear not. There are skills that any parent can learn to reduce sibling strife.

Many challenges

It can be hard to make changes when we're feeling hopeless. Just when you feel good about preventing a full blown fight from breaking out in the grocery store, along strolls that one perfect neighbor with the eight children who adore each other. Arr... It is possible to not only reduce some of the conflict between siblings, but to literally transform their relationship by adding a few new skills to our parenting style. I know this personally because I saw my two sons go through the transformation. What once looked like a turbulent relationship, reminiscent of the guests from the Jerry Springer Show, has evolved into a strong brotherly bond.

So what can be done to stop the Hatfields and the McCoy's? Here are some of the areas you can address. Help siblings deal with their feelings about each other, break them out of their negative roles, replace comparing kids with describing what is needed of each child individually, teach effective problem solving skills when they are not in the middle of a conflict, and more. Since it is most effective to add one new parenting skill at a time, we'll concentrate on how to begin the mission of reducing hostility between children by allowing them to voice their negative feelings.

Don't reject feelings

It is common to reject our children's negative feelings. When he says, "I hate the baby!" it's tempting to say, "No, you don't; you LOVE the baby." Or, "How can you say that about your little sister? I don't want to hear another word!" But when a child isn't allowed to voice his negative feelings, the feelings get bottled up inside. Those bottled up feelings come bursting out, like a bottle of soda that is shaken, by only the slightest irritation from a sibling. Parents don't have to agree with their children's feelings, just acknowledge them. This gives kids a way to safely discharge their anger. As Adele Faber says in her book, "Siblings Without Rivalry," "Not until the bad is allowed to come out can the good come in."

Denying children's feelings also robs them of their inner voice. It's like saying, "Don't trust your feelings, they are faulty." In today's world, children need a strong inner voice to help guide them toward good choices when they are not with us. A voice that will tell them, "Something about this situation doesn't feel right," and steers them clear of trouble. You can release the build-up of bad feelings by using words that identify those feelings. Just ask yourself, "How does my child feel right now?" and with empathy, reflect back those feelings. "You're really angry at your sister." "You sound furious." Or even "Sometimes having a baby in the house can be annoying to you." These

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Chili cook-off a simmering success

The 5th annual chili cook-off sponsored by the Miss Farmington pageant raised funds for the Warner Mansion.

BY MARY RODRIQUE
STAFF WRITER
mrodri@home.com.net

The chili was hot and the fellowship warm Sunday afternoon at Pages restaurant in downtown Farmington as the 5th annual Chili Cook-off sponsored by the Miss Farmington Pageant simmered to another successful run. For the first time, The People's Choice award was a tie between an entry from Children, Youth and Family Services of Farmington Hills - a co-sponsor - and a chicken chili prepared by the Warner Mansion staff.

The historic Warner Mansion was the recipient of funds raised this year. Cook-off pageant organizer Ginny Morris didn't have a final tally yet on the amount of money donated to the city's historical museum.

The Celebrity's Choice, voted on by a panel of judges, was an entry called B and D Green Chili, prepared by Bill Diehr of Farmington Hills and his old Navy buddy, Dave Polowski.

Plaques were presented to the winners by reigning Miss Farmington, Leslie Reinbold, and Miss Michigan, Audrie Chernauckas, a former Miss Farmington who started the chili-cook-off fund-raiser during her reign five years ago.

Many prizes

Claire Ambrose was winner of the 60-60 raffle and went home with \$266. Other gifts donated by Farmington merchants were raffled throughout the afternoon. They included a woven basket full of baked goods from The Farmington Bakery, which also supplied bread to accompany the chili; a gift bag full of boxes of Girl Scout cookies from a troop at William Grace Elementary; a backpack and a six pack cooler courtesy of Max and Erma's restaurant; a calendar and silver-plated candy dish from Amazing Savings; a body lotion basket from Deb's Crafts; gift certificates



Ticket-taking: Katie White, Madonna Emond, Ginny Morris and Leslie Reinbold welcome guests.

from Papa John's, Pages and The Pasta Stop restaurants. Contestants for the 2000 Miss Farmington pageant slated for June 21, including Jennifer Smith and Madonna Emond, acted as hostesses.

There were nine entries this year, including chilis from the host location, Pages, and The Pasta Stop next door on Farmington Road just south of Grand River.

"We've hosted for five years now," said Dennis Page, who has operated his restaurant for 18 years. "The pageant decides where to donate the money. Whatever charity, it's for a good cause. And for \$5, patrons get a soft drink, all the chili they want, and a chance to win prizes and vote on

their favorite chili. It's just a nice thing."

Judges mingle

Chief judge Harry Hairston of UPN-50 television sampled the offerings and mingled with other judges, including Dick Carvello, who manages the Warner Mansion for the city.

Carvello said the next goal is to upgrade the carriage house on the grounds of the Grand River mansion once occupied by Farmington's only Michigan Governor, Fred Warner. Also, "to get more kids involved in visiting the mansion," Carvello added.

"We just found ourselves a grandfather clock," he said. Farmington Hills Assistant to the

Fire Chief Bob Rebtoy, judging for the second year in a row, had a paper and pen handy.

"Last year, I was a rookie and it was hard to keep the entries separate," he said.

Asked why the fire department didn't enter its own version of chili, he said, "We have a microwave oven and we order takeout pizza. Those cooking days at the fire hall are in the past."

On the panel with Hairston and Rebtoy was Vane King, police chief of Flint Township.

"Policemen rarely turn down free food," he quipped. "So far, so good." Frederick Zoschke, executive director of the Southwest Michigan Pageant program, judged because "I really believe in supporting each other through the state. It's an opportunity to help and encourage others."

Drafted by girlfriend

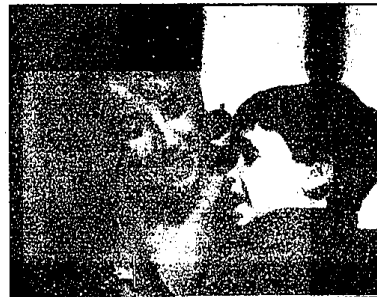
Lane Valliere, director/production coordinator for WNEM-5 television serving Flint, Saginaw, Bay City and Midland, was drafted into the judging by his girlfriend who is active in the pageant system.

Farmington Hills city councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio was also a first-time judge.

"The chili is all very good and very different," she noted.

Though many local politicians were spotted tasting chili, including Farmington Mayor Bill Hartsock and councilwoman Mary Bush, many other folks just came out because they like

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Pals: At left, Miss Michigan, Audrie Chernauckas, visits with Joshua Diehr, 2, at the chili cook-off. At right, Yelena Lesnick, 10, samples one of the nine chilis offered in the competition at Pages.



WOMEN IN POLITICS

Editor's note: In the next few weeks we will highlight area women elected officials in anticipation of a campaign workshop to help newcomers to the political field learn how to run

for office. The workshop is 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, March 25, at the William Costick Activities Center. Call the League of Women Voters for more information, (248) 647-1350.



Mary Bush

Mary Bush got started in politics by being active in the community. "I always envisioned myself on city council. I started with the Farmington Chamber of Commerce, then I was the president of the chamber, then I was appointed to the board of review," said Bush, who last year served as Farmington's mayor and currently is a city councilwoman. "It was like a natural progression."

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Margaret Schaeffer

Bullets flying overhead were what drove Margaret Schaeffer into politics. The retired Farmington 47th District Court judge moved to what was then Farmington Township in the 1960s, when hunting was legal in townships. "My husband was in the excavator hole of our house, which was under construction, and he heard shots overhead," she recalled. "My

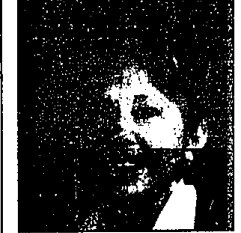
Please see SCHAEFFER, B3



Jody Soronen

Some say the best way to learn is by doing. That's what former Farmington Hills City Council veteran Jody Soronen did. And it worked. "I had no advice from anyone," said the former council member and mayor. "I knew some of the council members at that time. But I didn't go to them for help." Soronen started her long career of community involvement in her

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JoAnne McShane

A small group of people approached JoAnne McShane to run for the Farmington City Council in 1989. "She won that November. I had a great campaign team. We looked at what other successful candidates had done and we wanted to do something a little more creative," said McShane, who was elected to her fourth city council term in November 1999.

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