

## New U-M center gives hope to those suffering depression

This is a hopeful column on a sad subject. Depression as an illness is ranked by the World Health Organization as one of the top four most debilitating ailments in the world. As many as one in five women and one in eight men are at high risk of experiencing depression sometime in their lives, regardless of race, education or income.



Phil Power

Depressive illness, sometimes difficult to diagnose, often more difficult to cure. It is no respecter of persons, striking the old and the young, the successful and the struggling, those with happy families and those alone.

I know this all too well. My late wife, Sarah, suffered from severe depression, ultimately committing suicide. And my friend, Heinz Frechter, a charismatic force of nature who created from scratch a successful sun roof company and who owned a group of respected community newspapers serving the Downriver area, committed suicide earlier this year, after a long struggle with the disease.

Now there is some hope on the horizon. The University of Michigan is launching the nation's first comprehensive center devoted to treatment, research and education in depression.

The new U-M Depression Center will bring together and expand the university's existing programs in patient care, laboratory and clinical research, patient and family education and training for health care professionals and students.

"The time is right to focus all the resources we can on understanding and defeating this illness, and the social stigma that it carries, so that we can help the 18 million Americans who suffer from depression every year," says Dr. John Greden, the center's executive director.

The center will work with depression in patients of all ages, as well as with various

aspects of the disease: postpartum (after birth), bipolar (manic-depression) and treatment-resistant forms. Recent advances in medication and in talk therapy have made depression more treatable than in the past. But only 10 percent of all people with depression receive adequate treatment, according to Greden.

The center will focus on the following areas:

■ **Laboratory research:** Researchers at the center will explore the ways in which depression is caused by inherited genes, as well as the neurochemical signals within the brain.

■ **Clinical research:** Doctors at the center will test new medications and treatment methods and measure how patients do under various treatment strategies.

■ **Treatment:** Patients at the center will be treated by specialists in many fields, often within the same visit, using various approaches tailored to their individual diagnosis.

■ **Early diagnosis:** A big problem in treating

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depressive illness is the difficulty of early diagnosis. Free depression screenings for the community will be available through the center beginning next year.

■ **Education:** Both doctors and other health professionals will be exposed to diagnostic and treatment strategies. Equally important, workshops for patients and families will be offered beginning next February.

Anybody who has experienced the agony of a friend or relative with depression will be given new hope by the new depression center. In recent years, considerable advances in diagnosis and treatment have taken place, together with improved patient and family education.

With progress taking place on so many fronts, now is a perfect time to bring them all together.

For information and to register to participate in depression workshops at the center, call (734) 764-0267.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 853-2047, Ext. 4100, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net



Mike Malott

## Cybercourt proposal on track for fall approval

By the end of this year, Michigan lawmakers may well formulate an entirely new court, one unlike anything in operation anywhere in the country.

It's known as "Cybercourt." The idea, as put forward by Rep. Marc Shulman (R-West Bloomfield) and Gov. John Engler, would be to create an electronic, high-technology forum for resolving legal disputes between businesses.

The Cybercourt could be used by companies located anywhere in the country. Briefs and filings could be submitted to the court via the Internet. Hearings could be conducted by video conference.

A key feature of the court would be its so-called "rocket docket," a speedier schedule for hearing the cases and reaching decisions. The court would be for business disputes only. For example, cases involving trade secrets, non-compete clauses and confidentiality agreements are the types of cases that could be heard in Cybercourt.

Disputes over software development, business insurance and commercial banking could be taken to the court. And the court could address disputes over commercial real estate or shareholder rights.

Specifically prohibited from being heard in Cybercourt would be tort cases, malpractice cases, employer/employee arguments, landlord/tenant disputes and criminal matters.

Having already received the approval of the House of Representatives, the bill to create the court — H.B. 4140 — is expected to pass the Senate by the end of the year, and the court could be in operation next year.

If the point of creating such a court is lost on many Michigan residents, that's understandable. It is not an easy concept to grasp.

When Engler unveiled the idea earlier this year, he talked about making the state more technology-friendly, improving the state's reputation among high-tech businesses and making Michigan a trend-setter in the New Economy.

Ultimately, he explained, his hope was that the creation of the court would spur high-technology firms to move here.

Engler and Shulman pointed to the success of Delaware at attracting businesses through the adoption of favorable corporate law and having a court set up specifically to deal with corporate

law. Delaware has been so successful at it that today 250,000 corporations are registered in Delaware.

Companies registered in Delaware may be located elsewhere, but the spin-off has been a boon to that state's economy.

By creating Cybercourt, Shulman and Engler are hoping to do for Michigan, as it seeks to attract high-tech firms, what liberal corporate laws and the Court of Chancery have done for Delaware.

If it seems strange that companies might pick a state in which to locate based on the availability of a court and their ability to get before a judge to resolve legal disputes, you have to keep in the mind several characteristics of the high-tech world today.

For one — as lawyers and law professors are quick to point out — intellectual property rights is an area of law that has not been well defined. Rules of intellectual property and copyright, devised in the past for print and patents, don't always work well when applied to intern publishing and software development.

Disputes unique to the high-tech world — such as the recent case against Napster — have to be concluded quickly. Entire markets come and go, open and close, in the course of a couple years, less time than it now takes most complex business litigation to wend its way through our present court system.

So a technology-savvy court, able to issue good, solid decisions on the complicated issues surrounding technology law, could be real benefit to entrepreneurs and fast-moving tech firms, in turn benefiting the state.

Lawmakers are still trying to work out details as to how, exactly, the judges for the court would be appointed to the position and how the judges and court clerk would get paid.

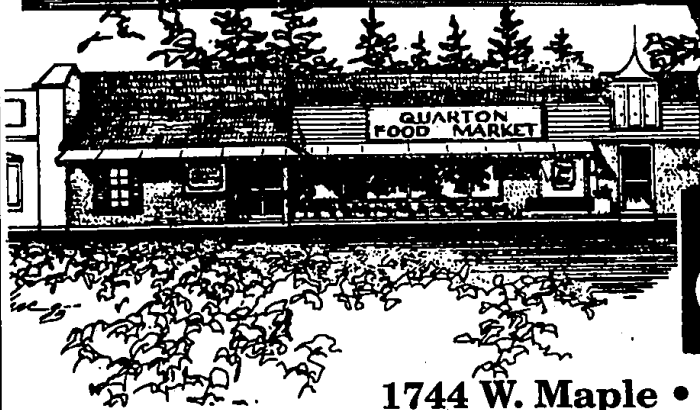
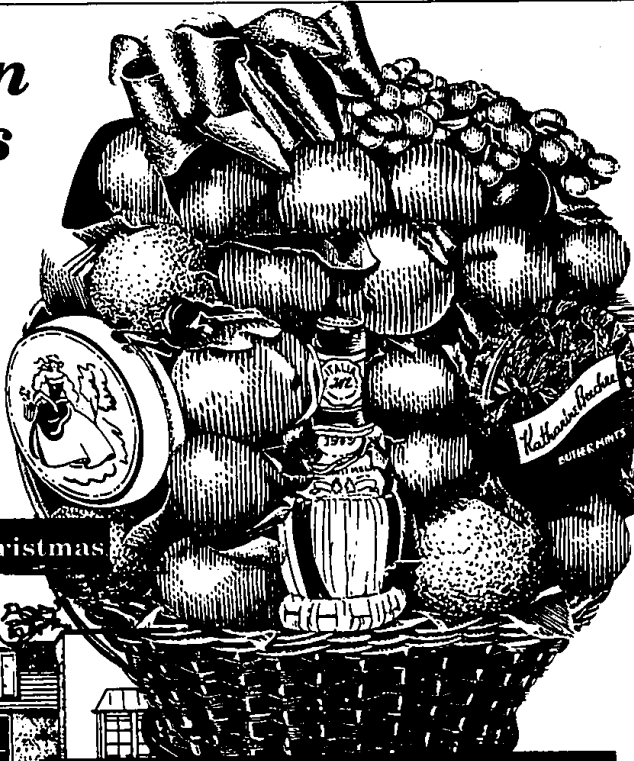
But overall the concept is sound. And it holds a great deal of potential for the state, even if the benefits aren't tangible or aren't always easy to spot.

Mike Malott reports on the local implications of state and regional events. He can be reached by telephone at (810) 237-0171 or by e-mail at mmalott@homecomm.net

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