



Insight

Dr. Paul Melrose

Explore family's legacy

In the New Year, everyone talks about resolutions; people seem to want to change things for the better. Sometimes, people focus on what they would like to change about themselves, either behaviors, or attitudes or beliefs. To look at what we want to change about ourselves, one of the places which we must look at is our family; we are already recipients of a legacy which we pass on to our children.

Families have a way of passing down over the generations themes, roles, rules and beliefs. One family therapist notes that we continue these patterns because we remain loyal to them.

But, what the family has given to us is not always positive. There may be patterns of physical or sexual abuse, of alcoholism, or of such rules as "Children should be seen and not heard." Inquiry into families demonstrates that often these patterns can be traced over three generations. If you are serious about making changes in yourself, and as a byproduct, developing a positive legacy to pass on to your children, there are three things which you can do.

THREE IDEAS

David Olsen, at our sister Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region, Albany, N.Y., suggests three ideas that I would like to share with you. To make changes in yourself and in the legacy you will leave you must examine the patterns which you have been given.

In contrast to the attitude of "I want it fixed now," this examination not only takes time, to discover what these patterns are, but because they took several generations to evolve, they will take several generations to modify.

You, however, through this examination and changes you implement for yourself, will make a wonderful start.

First, Olsen suggests, construct a family tree that will illustrate, over three generations, who the people were, how they related to others, and what events impacted their lives. Talking to older relatives will help this exploration.

In this way, you will uncover family patterns, such as "the good child," or the "little man," the "overly responsible one." Learn the rules which developed about conflict, intimacy, success and what it means, and how adults parent. These rules from the family seep into our marriages unknown.

Explore what key triangles you are involved in. As Olsen says, when things get tense in any relationship a third party is brought in. This takes the wind out of the potential conflict; it also suggests that a problem does not get resolved. Such things as talking to children about adult problems, staying late at the office, or drinking too much can be triangles. Try to disengage yourself from them.

Secondly, as you gain insight through the above research and exploration, start to notice and practice changing those behaviors which are destructive, which cut into the potential of possibilities and relationships.

PLEASE SEE MELROSE, C6



Pam Mowbray works three days a week at the Kroger store at Eight Mile west of Farmington. Her duties include bagging groceries and gathering shopping carts from the parking lot.

A special world

CLC helps adults with mental impairments live independently

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Leaving home six years ago was not easy for Pam Mowbray. Then a 26-year-old mentally impaired adult, she took a big step toward gaining independence not only for herself, but also to benefit her family. The chance to live out their lives without worrying about their special daughter every minute was important to Pam's parents, too.

And giving Mowbray the opportunity to live her life — to the best of her ability — is what the Community Living Centers based in downtown Farmington is all about.

Mowbray is among 130 members who belong to CLC, a nonprofit agency for adults with mental impairments.

The program allows clients to live in foster homes or their own apartments, work part time, have fun, make friends and learn to take care of themselves.

Though Mowbray said she misses her family, she enjoys the opportunities and independence she's earned.

Her sweet smile and bright blue eyes greet customers at the Kroger store on Eight Mile west of Farmington, where she's been a part-time bagger for the last several years.

Cashier Theresa Buckler said Mowbray works hard. "She's very sweet and she's always helping people," she said.

Mowbray is proud to point out a pin she earned for going beyond her job duties to help a customer.

The 32-year-old can't tell time or figure out change when

paying for something, says her mother, Ginny. But she knows her responsibilities at the home she shares with 15 others, such as doing the dishes, helping clean and keeping her room in shape.

And she wants to learn more.

Mowbray plays soccer, roller skates, listens to the radio and to her favorite singer Amy Grant and participates in Special Olympics.

She takes enrichment classes through Farmington Public Schools' adult education program.

Lately she's been learning about the computer.

Mowbray visits her parents on some weekends and always for family get-togethers and vacations.

"She plans on what's she's going to wear," said her mom.

Mowbray gives her paycheck to the program and is given an allowance.

Pictures of her family decorate her room. She said she's especially fond of her young nephew and niece.

Ginny volunteers as a receptionist at the Community Living Centers administration offices in downtown Farmington.

"It's nice," she said of the program and the people it serves. "They get to be independent, they take her to work and she has her friends close by. It's like a family here."

She said her daughter is learning how important it is to share and get along with others.

"They learn to give and take," Ginny said.

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When weather is better, Pam and her friends spend a lot more time outdoors.

CLC battles back from 2002 funding crisis

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

It was only last November that things were looking so grim financially for the Community Living Centers there was talk about shutting its doors.

That didn't happen, thanks to family members of the 130 clients who boosted their donations to keep things afloat, said Christine Compton, executive director of the program based in downtown Farmington.

The CLC gives mentally impaired adults a chance to live their lives as independently as possible. It was founded by Mary Wagner 35 years ago, when the state de-institutionalized its programs for the mentally impaired.

"Her philosophy was help them become independent," Compton said. That includes learning basic life skills, going to a job to earn money and keeping a checkbook.

The centers have 10 group homes, located in Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield and Royal Oak. All are co-ed and each has a house manager who makes sure needs are being met. There are also apartments for some clients who have more advanced living skills.

State cuts have strained the nonprofit program. About 12 percent of its state funding was cut in 2002, leaving 53 percent of the program's \$3 million annual budget dependent on fund-raising and donations.

PLEASE SEE FUNDING, C6

Universalist Church kicks off Life Long Learning

A Northville teacher and students founded Kids 4 Afghan Kids and in three years raised \$100,000 for the construction of a six-room school, a medical clinic, a bakery/kitchen and guesthouse in Afghanistan.

Khris Nedam will present the story through pictures and videotapes of how this all evolved 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 23. It

will be the kickoff presentation for the Life Long Learning Forum sponsored by the Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington.

Nedam, now a Northville teacher, lived in Afghanistan for almost four years, from 1990-94, and fled Kabul just before the Taliban arrived. Then in 1998, an Afghan speaker at a Northville elementary

school inspired students to help the Afghan children. The students realized the best thing they could provide long term would be an education.

So Nedam formed a Michigan-based nonprofit organization with the goal of re-establishing educational facilities for children in Afghanistan and to address the desperate health conditions in which the families live.

The school opened in March 2001 with six teachers and 465 students in first through sixth grade. Currently, there are 650 students and 16 teachers.

The desire for education is so strong that many of the children walk to school two and one-half hours each way. A small number of children live at the school because it is too far for

them to walk each day. Kids 4 Afghan Kids' focus is on fund raising and they try to purchase as many materials as possible locally in Afghanistan to help the economy. The villagers donated 10 acres of land for the project. Construction workers, all residents of the valley, lived in tents on the land for two and one-half years to build the school.

Many construction materials, such as mortar, were made on site. A deep well was dug to provide water for mixing the mortar. Because of the severe drought, all of the villagers' wells were dry so this well was constructed as a water source for the entire village. Ninety-eight percent of the children in

PLEASE SEE CHURCH, C6