

Cancer patient says 'live each day fully'

By LORRAINE McCLISH
"Make Today Count," a self-help organization for the terminally ill, will get started in Oakland County this month under the auspices of the American Cancer Society.

Its founder, Orville Kelly of Burlington, Iowa, was in the area this week as principal speaker when the society held its annual meeting to tell of the organization's simple goal: Live each day as fully and completely as possible.

Kelly is a cancer victim who is now undergoing chemotherapy treatments. His attitudes on life

and death, he says, took a sharp about face when "I brought it out in the open. When I started to talk about it."

THE FORMER newspaperman put down his thoughts on being a cancer victim that was spread to all parts of the United States, Canada, parts of Europe and Africa by the Associated Press.

In turn, correspondence that stemmed from his story confirmed a suspicion that the emotional problems he felt were shared by most who were in the same situation.

"My doctor talked to me from a medical standpoint," he said. "My minister talked to me from a spiritual standpoint. Nobody talked about today."

Worst of all, he believes, is the fear that keeps one from talking at all. Friends stopped coming to the house. Children are forever being shielded from death or the likelihood of it. The stigmas and old wives' tales persist.

"And this leaves you with no one to share it with."

When Kelly brought together the founding group of "Make Today Count" in his home town he said he never suspected he would be "getting into the field of death and dying but this is in part what has happened."

"Society as a whole is terrified of death," he continued, "and we all have to face it as a part of life. When people ask me now how can I be happy when I know I have a terminal illness, my answer is, 'We're all terminal.' A terminal illness only serves to make us more aware."

HE WENT ON to say, "Grief is human. But we start grieving before the funeral occurs. Every day was a funeral in my house before I started to counter this business of 'I'm going to have to die' with 'I'm going to learn to live with it.'"

Another point Kelly touched on was the regret common to all men having to do with things undone after it is too late.

"We wish we would have told the wife more often that we loved her. We wish we would have held the child a little more. We wish we would have resolved the feud. We wish, we wish but we didn't take the time."

He adds a little ruefully, "It's too bad this aspect of death has to occur to make one more aware of life. Too see these things."

KELLY HAS started 12 chapters of Make Today Count since January. He has plans for about 30 more and requests for "literally hundreds."

He believes his idea of mutually sharing problems and adopting his philosophy has taken hold as fast as it has is "due to the fact that I'm a very ordinary person. I have no great amount of courage or no

great amount of insight. The attitude seems to be if you can do it, I can do it."

"I really believe that if I were Brian Piccolo (the Chicago Bears football star whose death from cancer was told in the movie 'Brian's Song') or John Wayne, it wouldn't have caught on so fast."

Another factor is that "when cancer hits one member of the family, it hits the whole family. There is the reluctance on the patients' part to talk. The family members are scared to mention a word. So many times I have heard the phrase 'I want to spare my husband' or 'I want to spare my wife'."

Still another factor is that Kelly believes, that until now no one has made a positive approach in a positive way to fill "the vacuum that's always been there."

KELLY DOESN'T claim to have the complete answer but his philosophy sums up with "You are living with it. Face it. Do something about it. There are cures, sure, we've all heard of them but the fear is still there. We don't bring lives back to normal, but we can bring living back to normal under the circumstances."

The Oakland County Unit of the American Cancer Society has never had a counseling or guidance service, but working under the general guidelines of Make Today Count it will start a volunteer case worker program on a one-to-one basis for those persons who are unable to attend meetings.

Both Kelly and a spokesman for the society stressed that the chapter that will get underway in this area is not to be limited to cancer patients, but is for all persons who have a terminal illness.

The chapters are formed on a purposefully loose structure and

Family services re-elect officers

Julian Cook of Bloomfield Hills and Harlan Heimiller of Southfield have been re-elected vice presidents and trustees of Child and Family Services of Michigan (CFSM).

CFSM is a non-sectarian voluntary special services agency serving throughout the state. There are 16 community offices with an administrative headquarters in Brighton.

all of the meetings are conducted on a very informal basis. There are no officers involved. There are no paid administrators and very little money is involved. Some chapters meet in members' homes, or in church basements, or in a local service club hall, any place that requires no charge.

IN ADDITION to active members, the organization allows associate membership to family members of any member, registered nurses,

physicians, "and any whose interests would further the goals of the organization."

"We want to bring together both victims of incurable illnesses and other members of the community so that personal and emotional problems may be discussed and if possible, resolved," Kelly said.

Persons who are interested in becoming a part of Make Today Count are asked to contract the American Cancer Society office at 285 Elm, Birmingham, MI 4-0770.



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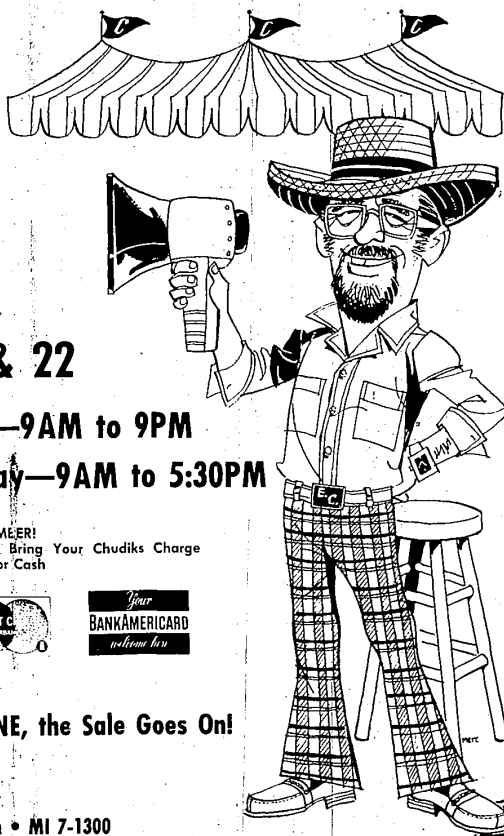
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