

FAMILY FOCUS

NEWS FROM WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER

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SHEPHERD, MICHIGAN

MAY, 1990



New facility planned for diversity

People who have not recently made the trek to the West Midland Family Center are in for a surprise.

Gone is the two-story landmark building that housed recreational programs the past 16 years. In its place is the gleaming \$1.8 million facility that houses expanded programs and opportunities for residents of west Midland County.

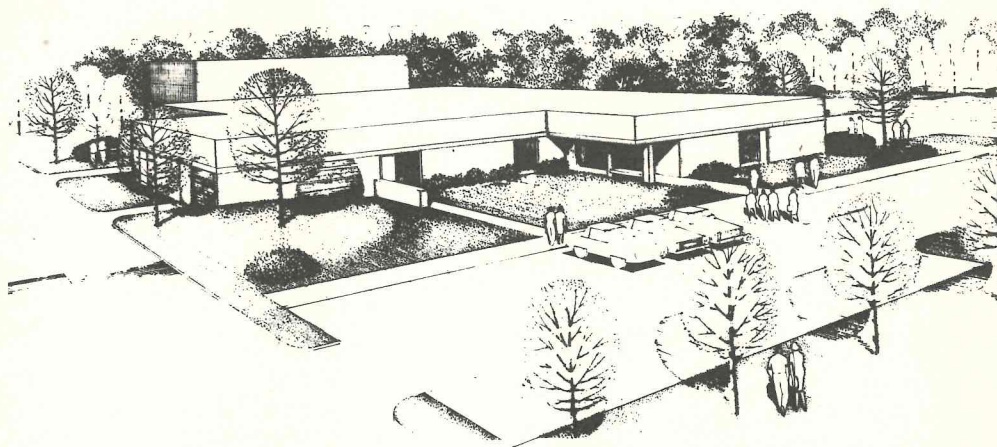
Planning for the new building resulted in the creation of three distinct modules, or groups of rooms, which easily can be visualized when one stands at the reception counter in the lobby.

Directly across the lobby one can see the entrance doors to the dining room.

There, the Greendale happy Diners congregate each weekday — normally 30 to 40 each week for lunch and fellowship. The dining room, part of the Dining Module, can accommodate up to 200 for larger dinners. A quarter of the room has a resilient tile floor for dancing.

Adjacent to the dining room is the large kitchen with a convenient serving counter, and a large walk-in cooler. The kitchen, with its oak laminate work surfaces and abundance of storage cabinets, is primarily used by the Midland County Council on Aging staff to prepare the noon meals for seniors.

Returning to the lobby, to our right we can see the Activities Module. A wide corridor extends from the lobby past the activities room to the gym. The gym, with its maple floor and padded walls, is the scene of an increasing variety of uses. Seniors walk around the gym regularly, especially in the winter months. Drop-in basketball, basketball and volleyball league play, teen and youth dances, senior armchair aerobics, plus karate, gymnastics and aerobic classes are all ongoing activities in the gym.



Above is an artist's rendering of the new West Midland Family Center at the corner of West Isabella and Alamando roads. The facility opened in October and has been host to an increasing number of programs since that time. The building was designed by Dow-Howell-Gilmore Associates and built by Helger Construction.

The activities room, adjacent to the gym with its snack bar, pool tables, video games, table top games and big screen TV, is bustling with teenagers on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Another popular room in the Activities Module is the fitness room. The room has been supplied with a carefully planned battery of exercise equipment.

Locker rooms, conveniently accessible from the gym and a corridor extending southward from the lobby, fill out the Activities Module.

The third module, the Classroom or "Quiet" Module, occupies the northeast corner of the 21,000-square-foot building. The library as well as conference, baby-sitting and multipurpose rooms make up this module.

The library, with its oak book shelves, is the scene of tutoring sessions for school age children as well

as a word processing class.

The multipurpose room houses the Preschool and Playschool classes during the weekday as well as night school classes in the evening. With its divider wall, to make two rooms out of one, it can accommodate several activities at the same time. A special feature of this room are the two sinks, one at adult height and one for 3 or 4 year olds.

The baby-sitting room has proven to be especially helpful for parents attending Parenting Classes.

Energy conservation was also carefully evaluated during the building's design. First, four inches of insulation was installed on the building roof and three inches in the exterior walls. Next, the heating and air conditioning systems were planned to allow individual rooms or modules to be shutdown when they were not in use.

Say 'Yes'!

The Center hosted the first recreational-activity-sponsored Say "Yes" to Youth of Midland County on Saturday, April 7. One-hundred-sixteen youth turned out, mostly dressed in shorts and shades, to complement the festively decorated center. The evening included dancing with music provided by Dynamic Entertainment, and also free reign of the activity room, gym and fitness room. Hawaiian shaved ice didn't turn out to be as popular as Mountain Dew (thanks in large part to the youth from Leiphart school), but everything else turned out just the way the youth planned it.

"Youth planning, promotion and organizing at every step is what made the party so successful" said Greg Dorrien, assistant director. "Youth from 15 school systems attended with

25 kids volunteering to help plan future Say "Yes" events. Graphic artists from Midland High, spearheaded by Dave Clark, made dozens of beach party decorations. Many other youth participated in the publicity and by making school announcements and distributing flyers.

Say "Yes" surveyed all area high school students in the spring of 1989. Inadequate recreation facilities topped the list problems expressed by the students.

"The Center is working diligently with Say "Yes" in an effort to expend its traditional user base of local residence," said Dorrien.

Special thanks must go to volunteers Ann Ward, Shirley Clark, Dennis Melchi, Kyle Herkner, Heather Sherman, Melissa Dullock, Jamie Stark, Louise Fiosenza and Kevin Miller.

Did you know...?

DID YOU KNOW that older Americans benefit from strength training exercises? A properly designed strength training program will increase bone strength and density, (which decreases the likelihood of Osteoporosis), an improved level of strength and endurance (which decreases muscle related problems), and an improved self-image.

DID YOU KNOW The West Midland Family Center offers a program designed especially for Senior Citizens in strength training and Aerobics? The program is free to seniors Monday through Friday 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. The gym is available for walking from 9:30 to 11 a.m., the weight room is available from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. with supervision at that time. The weight

room consists of eight weight machines, treadmill, two stationary bikes and a stair climber. These machines have been scientifically developed to give you an easy efficient and very safe strength training program. Before using the machines you must be orientated by fitness instructor Kathy Breedlove. Kathy has been involved with weight training for 12 years, she has been involved in working with seniors for five years.

Kathy also teaches arm-chair aerobics which meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11-11:20 a.m.

Class sizes range from 10 to 25 people, so come on out to West Midland Family Center for some great fun while increasing your health. For more information, please call West Midland Family Center, 832-3256.

SPECIAL EVENTS

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| May 16 | Youth Dance.....grades 2-6 |
| May 19..... | EAL Youth Dance, grades 7-12 |
| May 20..... | Volunteer Dinner, 6 p.m. |
| May 21..... | Senior Potluck, 6 p.m. |
| May 27..... | Auxiliary Dinner, 12 noon |
| May 30..... | Word processing class begins |
| June 18..... | Summer Playground Program begins |
| June 23..... | Youth Dance, grades 7-12 |
| June 25..... | Senior Potluck, 6 p.m. |
| July 4..... | Carnival, relays, picnic |
| July 21..... | Youth Dance, grades 7-12 |
| Aug. 7-9..... | Safety Town |

Closed Sundays through August

From the president's chair

TO: All donors, families and associates of West Midland Family Center.

As we fulfill our pledge to keep you abreast of our progress at the West Midland Family Center with this first newsletter, we are again reminded of our good fortune to live in a community where we have the resources and talent to nurture and spawn this needed community facility.

We continue to feel very positive about the contribution and growing acceptance of this center to the families of West Midland County after just six months of use. There is little doubt that new requirements will emerge as we serve our growing clientele; and, as these become apparent we will share our needs with you as loyal supporters.

In summary, it is our plan to use the newsletter as a primary communications vehicle to keep you informed about the operation of the center, the evolving needs, and plans for the future. Further, it is our continuing mission to better serve the changing social, education and recreation interests of the West Midland community.

Thank you for your support in getting us to where we are; and, please give us the benefit of your guidance, counsel, and support as we proceed.

FAMILY FOCUS

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER

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| Assistant Director | Greg Dorrien |
| Program Director | Jamie Smith |
| Clerk/Accountant | Janet Miller |
| EAL Counselor | Mike Ritt |
| Receptionist | Judy Wirtz |
| Building supervisor | Diane Dauer |

Teachers make preschool fun for kids

West Midland Family Center's preschool is an active, often noisy room full of three-, four- and five-year-old students. They are learning about themselves, their world and their place in it.

In the fall the children enter this big strange building with many questions in their heads. Why can't my Mom stay every day? Will the teacher be nice to me? Who are all these kids? Will my Dad remember to come get me? It can be a scary place even with the bright, cheery room and all those great toys.

The first weeks are spent getting

comfortable with each other. Gradually, the children learn the names of the teacher and new friends and they find out that the preschool is a fun, happy place to be spending a few days a week. They can choose what they want to play with, whether they want to paint, play with playdough, climb and slide or do quiet table activities. It is all play and it is all learning.

As the children play with the toys and games and each other, their confidence and self-esteem increase. They make choices, get results and

draw conclusions without the threat they will do something the wrong way. By building, matching, putting things together, sharing, taking turns and role playing, children learn about comparison, classifying, sequencing, cause and effect, inference, and predicting outcomes. These skills are all a part of what one needs to know before one is ready to write, to read and to do math. This early learning provides essential skill building that prepares children for the academics of elementary school.

At the West Midland Family preschool the teachers — Elaine Fabinski and Susan Mathis-Lilley — keep their education current in early childhood education and childhood development. Elaine received her bachelor's degree in elementary education. She has current Michigan certification for elementary teaching and will be finished with her master's degree in early childhood education in December. She has taught in elementary grades and worked with preschool age children for six years. She is presently teaching the program for four-year-old students on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Susan has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and is halfway toward the completion of a master's degree in child development. She has taught preschool for six years and coordinated Safety Town in Midland (for preschoolers) for five years. Susan now teaches the the Playschool class for three-year-old students.



Youngsters play in the new preschool room at the West Midland Family Center.

Comments from the Executive Director's desk

No day is typical, but some are more typical than others. You might see:

8 a.m. — If you should stop by at West Midland Family Center you would see couples coming to walk in the gym. Some are handicapped, one with Alzheimer's, but they all love walking in the gym.

8:50 a.m. — You would see little 4-year olds coming for preschool. All are learning to share and explore new things. This continues throughout the day as we have three preschool classes. After the mothers drop the children off at the classroom, some stop by the front desk to sign-up for a computer class, to use the fitness room or to register the children in an after-school program.

9:30 a.m. — The seniors start gathering to walk in the gym or workout in the fitness room. Some join in during arm chair aerobics or just stop to socialize.

3 p.m. — The favorite time of all is when the children come after school to wait for their parents to pick them up. Some children join after school programs, others are here to be tutored while some need to use the library for a report that they need to do for school. If you were to take the time to listen, you would hear a 15-year-old girl telling the receptionist that her mother dropped her off at the Center, while her mothers goes to work and that she would be picked up at 9 p.m.

You would hear a 13-year-old girl, who has been coming to the Center since she was four years old say, "I love it here at the Center."

You would see a group of 15 to 20 people from the M-20 Alliance group coming from the dining room saying, "It sure is nice to have a facility like this on M-20 to have our meetings at."

Best of all, you would hear the staff say, "I love my job."

There are so many more things we can do for the people in this community. If you would like to be a part of West Midland Family Center, stop in and join us. No matter what your age, there will be something for you to do.

Norisez to get Orrin Barrett award

After the West Midland Family Center was completed, it hardly seemed appropriate to present Orrin Barrett with a watch or a plaque or another "traditional" gift showing appreciation.

After all, Barrett was construction supervisor for the building, a project which occupied months of the retired Dow Chemical Co. engineer's time.

One would find him at the Center early in the morning and late at night — solving problems, working over glitches with the construction crews, preparing notes to present to the board and myriad other activities.

And he did it all as a volunteer.

So the Center Board of Directors and staff enlisted the help of Jim Burlingame, himself a volunteer, to help put together the Orrin Barrett Volunteer of the Year award program. Each year the Center will honor outstanding volunteers who contribute



Norisez



Barrett

a part of their lives to the Center's well-being.

A plaque honoring Barrett hangs in the Center's lobby listing those volunteers honored. Initially four were honored. They are Donna Hackett, a long-time volunteer; Ed Wall, who designed the Center's accounting system; Walt Trapp, one of the Board's initial members; and Dick Sinclair, who

served the Board as counsel until his death this month.

On May 20 another name will be added. Chuck Norisez has been named as the 1990 Orrin Barrett Volunteer of the Year.

Norisez has operated the bingo game for the Center's Auxiliary since it began and has been a board member since 1984. The Auxiliary works to raise money for certain Center activities.

In addition he is on the Center's Activities, Human Resource and Facilities committees as well as being Board secretary.

According to Center Executive Director Phyllis Breedlove, Norisez has put in "many, many hours" of his personal time aiding the Center's operation.

Norisez will be presented with his award during the Volunteer Dinner May 20.

Carnival being planned for Fourth of July holiday

The month of October came quickly and we had just moved into our new facility. The entire month was hectic with moving in the new building and preparing for the Halloween Carnival which was scheduled for the 30th of the month. The staff put in many hours of work building and painting the 10 different booths that were to be in the carnival. The carnival was set up for children in second through sixth

grades. The 30th of the month came very quickly and the staff was very anxious to see how many new faces the new facility would bring. Finally the time came for the carnival to begin, the halls of the center were packed with more than 350 children dressed in costumes anxiously awaiting for the carnival to begin. Inside the doors of the gym there was a wide variety of games for the children to play and

snacks for them to eat.

Another carnival is now being planned.

It will take place on July 4, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be a variety of game booths set up for the community to enjoy, including a dunk tank which will allow people to try and get certain staff members wet. There will also be a potluck picnic and relay races after the carnival.



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