

# 4 Feature

## Shelter fights back the tears

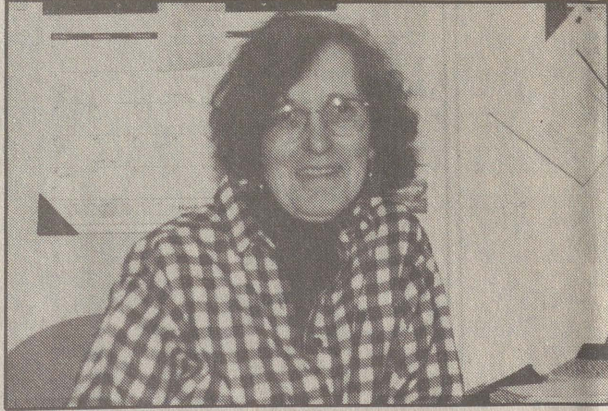


PHOTO BY DEBBIE PARKS

**Barbara Morgan, Shelter's director, maintains a positive outlook.**

By KENT ANDERSON  
NEWS EDITOR

It is a vile trend that pervades the country like a slithering serpent, gliding through urban and rural communities, between racial and social classes, and winding to the very summit of the celebrated elite. Domestic violence strikes without considering any type of distinction.

It's not easy to treat, not easy to uncover and punish. So, the only way to handle domestic violence is to lucidly understand it, in many cases, give it voice and attention by the communities in which it exists, according to Barbara Morgan, director of Shelter Inc. here in Alpena.

It had always been a family issue, but about twenty years ago the movement to seriously address domestic violence began, Morgan said. Also, more recently, the infamous O.J. Simpson trial gave an elevated sense of realism to the issue on a national and local level, she stated.

What must be understood about domestic violence is that it is a learned pattern of behavior. According to Morgan, nobody is born with a trait that will cause a person to become an abuser, for one must first bear witness, in childhood, to domestic abuse or be themselves abused before he or she arrives at the brutal tendency.

Morgan made it clear, however, that not every child who grows up in a violent household will evolve into a batterer. There is no way to

predict who will be an abuser or a victim.

"It's not just one instance when somebody comes home drunk and beats their wife," Morgan said, driving home the point that domestic violence is a pattern of behavior.

Morgan explained that the reason a victim doesn't leave his or her abuser is because they have been "conditioned" to accept the abuse as normal, perhaps even as love.

Just as the abuser has learned to abuse, the victim has learned to be a victim, grown into a mind complaisant with the violence and/or manipulation. A victim, Morgan said, feels powerless to take any action. They feel worthless, helpless, and without hope.

There is hope, however. Shelter Inc. exists as a sign of that hope, a way to escape the furious evil of the abuser and find the help, the counseling, to cope with the damage that has been seared onto the mind and body.

Shelter Inc. is one of 45 program sites in Michigan which provides services and shelters for victims of domestic violence. Every site covers specific counties in the state, which, along with the federal government and local donations, provides the funding for the shelters' operations.

Alpena's Shelter Inc. is primarily responsible for Alcona, Alpena, Iosco, Montmorency, and Presque Isle counties, but is more than willing to provide assistance to anyone from any county who may require help with a

violent domestic situation. Nobody is turned away, according to Morgan.

In existence for roughly nineteen years, Shelter Inc. was created when the Department of Social Services and area residents felt the need to address the problem of domestic violence.

Shelter Inc. is always within reach, operating a twenty-four hour crisis line, and can provide a victim of domestic violence with a safe house, a place to escape from the terror of the abuser, counseling, child services (counseling for children who have lived in a violent domestic setting), and legal advocacy. Batterer's counseling is also available.

Shelter Inc. has the capacity to enshrine 17 people within its safe house. Last year, of residential clients, Shelter housed 85 adults and 175 children. Of non-residential clients, 125 were given safe-housing. The crisis-line received between 300-400 calls.

Speaking of this year's business, Morgan said, "We've been consistently busy since the first of the year." The busiest time of the year seems to be summer, according to Morgan. "Sometimes, during the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, families will stay together, because having a family is better than no family," she stated.

Morgan had some advice for college students, who are at a crucial stage in the development of serious relationship skills. "Dignity and respect," she said, speaking to both genders, but specifically to women. Both individuals in a relationship need to understand that nobody needs to live with abuse, Morgan relayed.

Concerning the future of Shelter Inc., Morgan said, "What we'd really like to do is go out of business."

## Venusians and Martians learn to listen

By K. J. HANSON  
STAFF WRITER

The Alpena General Hospital is hosting a four part series, called, *Look Who's Talking: Women in the 90's... and the men who love them.*

The first scheduled program was presented by Michael Najarian, President of Personal Growth Productions.

Najarian's talk, "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus," stems from the works of Dr. John Gray. Gray is the author of the above - titled book, and others such as "Mars and Venus in the Bedroom."

Michael Najarian studied under Dr. Gray for 8 years. He now spends his life interpreting Gray's teachings and conducting seminars. Dr. Gray's books and tapes are produced in 37 different languages.

The program was presented at the Alpena Civic Center, on Thursday, March 14. All 550 tickets available were sold - out.

The majority of the audience were women, but many couples were in attendance. Najarian felt it was important to point these brave souls out to the rest of the audience. The gist of the program was learning advance relationship skills. According to Najarian, "Commonly occurring differences can prevent mutually fulfilling relationships."

Najarian's brilliant stage presence helped bring this message home in a comical way. He used the phrase "Men from Mars" to show that men and a women can have completely different feelings about the same subjects. For example, nobody disagreed with him when he stated, "

When a man answers, 'nothing's wrong,' to a woman's concerned inquiries, it means there is nothing wrong that his mate can fix. On the other planet, Venus, "nothing's wrong" means something is definitely bothering the woman. On Venus, you can go to jail for not sticking around to help her discover her feelings.

According to Najarian, a man communicates by starting at point A and ending, in an orderly fashion, at point B. Najarian was quick to point out that women, on the other hand, may begin a discussion at point A, then openly circle the issue at hand many times before alighting at the coveted point B.

According to Najarian, the problems arise when the Martians try to apply their rules to the Venusian way of life. They do this by interrupting the Venusian flow by offering unwanted advice, such as 'Well, why don't you just quit your job' or, 'So what's the point,' instead of empathizing with them as their Venusian friends would.

Najarian summed this up by stating "A woman's conversation to a man is like a radio, they only listen when they like what's playing." Laughter erupted from the packed house. Couples and friends pointed to each other in knowing conspiracy.

According to Najarian's theory, the Venusians need to understand that if Martians are allowed to pull away and go into their caves, as it is there nature to do, when attempting to resolve some kind of difficulty in the relationship, they are more likely to come back ready to talk. Feeling insecure, the Venusians are apt to follow the Martians into their caves, hoping to discover what is bothering them. Najarian called this the "rubber band theory." Because women talk to discover their true feelings, while men stew in silence, this can cause a lot of upheaval in a relationship.

Najarian was able to point out our differences, as men and women, in a way that poked fun at them, yet also brought them into the light for better understanding.

Najarian stated that he is presenting this program in the hopes of achieving world peace. This may seem like a far - fetched way of achieving this, but peace starts in your own backyard. By learning good communication skills with your family, you're more inclined to use them in the real world.

## To be aware is the thing

By KENT ANDERSON  
NEWS EDITOR

Domestic violence is a pattern of learned behavior, which is centered about the abuser's utilization of physical assault (hitting, shoving, etc.), sexual assault (unwanted, forced sexual activity), or emotional abuse, by means of verbal or less overt manipulation, to control, dominate, another individual. Stalking can also be considered as a method of domination.

If any of the following has ever been done by a companion, he or she has committed domestic violence.

- Held, tied down, or restrained one's partner.
- Used a weapon to threaten one's partner.
- Threatened to kill or harm one's partner or the partner's children, friends, or family members.
- Destroyed household or personal belongings and/or hurt or killed pets.

There are less apparent, but far more devilish representations of domestic violence:

- Preventing one's partner from seeing friends/ family.
- Preventing one's partner from getting a job or going to school.
- One partner keeping all of the couple's money under

his or her sole control and/or refusing to pay the bills or buy food and necessities.

The latter examples are acts of domestic violence, but they may not be criminal offenses unless other criminal activity is present.

"In the law as it reads now, emotional abuse is not considered a crime," Barbara Morgan, director of Shelter Inc., said.

She further stated that the law does not take action until a physical act has been committed. One can still take the situation to court, but unless the emotional abuse is connected to some form of physical, prosecutable incident, it will be difficult to prove, according to Morgan. Steps have been taken to prepare police officers for domestic violence situations. Classes on the subject are now part of the curriculum at the police academy, Morgan said.

Victims of all forms of abuse should contact a community agency (such as Shelter Inc.) for help. If a person is the victim of violence that is clearly against the law, he or she should report the offenses to the police immediately.

The important thing to remember, however, is that a person being abused must seek some form of assistance immediately.

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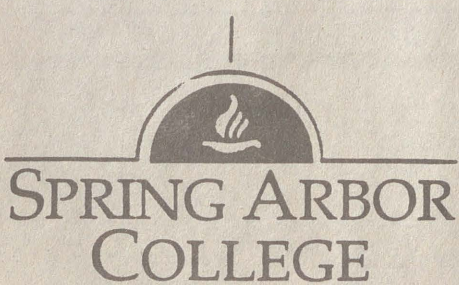
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