

## WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER'S

# Family

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ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR AREA RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

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## WEST MIDLAND SENIORS ON THE GO

The "Golden Days" of retirement have been redefined at West Midland Family Center. Previously epitomized by sitting quietly in a rocking chair knitting while reflecting quietly over a cup of tea. Today's seniors seem to prefer an array of colors: illustrated in the form of multiple activities for their busy lives. This statement is easily substantiated Monday through Friday with a quick glance around WMFC. There you will find a very active group of seniors going out of their way to dispel the myths of aging and continue the ways of youth.



*Stanley out for his morning stroll!*

Depending on the day of the week you will see: feisty games of euchre, free BINGO for prizes, a monthly birthday party or individuals liberated by the sounds of a local musical group, dancing without care. All this after they have put in nearly 45 minutes of low impact aerobics! During the summer months their day begins in the pool with water aerobics. Weekdays at "The Greendale site" between 20-100 individuals gather together for a noon meal provided by Senior Services (of Midland County). Tammy Jerome, Site

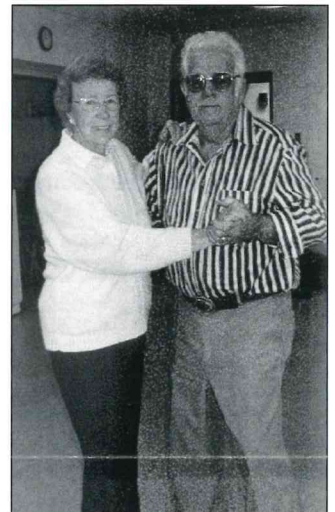
Manager encourages anyone sixty years of age or older to consider trying out the Greendale site where for two dollars a full meal is provided. Now that price is reminiscent of days gone by even if the seniors are not!

The seniors that frequent the Center are intent on improving their minds and developing new skills not just occupying their time. These seniors are often enrolled in one of WMFC's free computer classes for adults. Some do start with the most basic of concepts i.e., a mouse does not necessarily eat cheese or scurry about on the floor. Most desperately want to learn about email and searching on the Internet. Many advance to an Intermediate class or they may take a specialized class like Excel. Clearly, WMFC seniors are learning new things and working with the technology of today.

Not only are the seniors busy on site but WMFC and Midland County's Senior Services work jointly to provide

activities that engage seniors outside of the Center as well. Approximately five times a year, staff members from both agencies and senior participants take field trips. The destinations vary and are scheduled with economy and respect for fixed-income living in mind. They have visited Dow Gardens, in particular the Butterfly House open to the public each March. They visit the community of Frankenmuth and take a shopping spree at Bronner's. As a rule they get tickets for the "Singing Christmas Tree" each

December and soon they are taking a trip to Loafers Glory to browse the shops and eat lunch.



*Helen and Melvin dancing without care.*



*Active Effie: Familiar face at the Center.*

Effie Swoffer who has been attending activities at the Center for ten years believes the friendships she has formed and the ability to visit with others are among her primary reasons for coming to the Center. While she was initially hesitant to attend, she agreed to "try it out" with a friend. That's all it took and she

was sold. "The people here are very friendly, they make you feel welcome," said Effie. "People should just come in and give it a try." Over the years that she has been coming to the Center Effie has become very involved. Daily, she helps the Senior Services staff members assemble the 49 "Meals on Wheels" that are packed for home delivery to individuals unable to come in for a hot lunch. Yes sir, WMFC is not the place to go if you're looking to do nothing!



# HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AND APPRECIATION AWARDS DINNER

*Please Join West Midland Family Center Staff  
and Board Members  
In Honoring the Contributions of  
Three Very Special Individuals:*

**Rod Dishaw**

*"Phyllis Breedlove, Friend of the Center Recipient"*

**Jill Derry**

*"Orrin Barrett, Volunteer of the Year Recipient"*

**Anita Ramirez**

*"Stephen Barstow, Youth  
Volunteer of the Year Recipient"*

**At WMFC's Holiday Open House  
Tuesday ~ December 6, 2005  
5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

**Appreciation Award Ceremony Begins Promptly  
at 5:45 pm -Dining Room**

This year West Midland Family Center will pay tribute to all its volunteers at the annual Holiday Open House on Tuesday December 6, 2005. The outstanding contributions of the award recipients will be highlighted beginning at 5:45 p.m. Dining room doors will close at 5:45. To accommodate the large crowd there will be two seatings for dinner. The first seating is for those attending the Ceremony. When finished first seating guests are encouraged to attend the rest of the Open House festivities, making way for the second seating.

**Open House events for those selecting the second seating option:** Please know that while the Appreciation Awards Ceremony is taking place (and throughout the evening), other community members can participate in a multitude of activities geared for the whole family. There will be 'Make it-Take-it' craft tables, a free book give away, carnival games and (of course) pictures taken with Santa. For those wishing to also give back to the community, toys may be placed under our Christmas tree for area children. This event is in honor (and in place of) the annual Diane Dauer Toy Drive. Many of you know Diane as the longest serving staff member of WMFC who is currently battling cancer. A scrumptious dinner buffet will be served in the dining room after the first seating has concluded, (so no one leaves hungry!)



**Rod Dishaw**

**Rod Dishaw  
"Phyllis Breedlove,  
Friend of the Center Recipient"**

Over the years, West Midland Family Center has been blessed with a multitude of "Guardian Angels." We are fortunate to count Rod Dishaw among them. As principal of Floyd Elementary School, Rod is a great champion of youth programs at WMFC. Because Floyd Elementary and the Center "share" so many of the same students, Rod does all he can to encourage family participation in Center events as well as Floyd school based programs.

Rod welcomes our staff members to Floyd as they encourage parents to enroll their students in our After-school Program. He wants these children to become successful and therefore encourages their participation in all Center programs. He recognizes that by working together, we will have a much greater impact on the lives of children than either organization could do alone. His collaborative spirit results in an excellent network of support for children and families.

Rod is determined to be familiar with and use all available resources to enhance the educational experience of children. He knows that partnering with the Center will benefit "his" kids and therefore he makes an effort to encourage participation purely for the good of the children. On occasion, Rod has brought Floyd School programming to the Center because he knows that in some ways, for some parents the Center is less threatening than a school building. Recently, Rod was the inspiration behind the joint Preschool/After-school Program's Educational Game Night. Rod and many of his staff members played educational games with parents and children and distributed books developed to help parents help their children with homework. Another "Rod inspired" program covered the topic of helping parents take the hassle out of homework with Rod enthusiastically offering to be one of the presenters.

Obviously, Rod is highly dedicated to the education of children. He was a classroom teacher at Floyd Elementary from 1997- 2002 where he taught third and fourth grades before becoming Principal in the fall of 2002. For his dedication to children and loyalty to the Center Rod is indeed a great "Friend of the Center"



**Jill Derry**

**Jill Derry  
"Orrin Barrett,  
Volunteer of the Year Recipient"**

Jill Derry is a preschool teacher's best friend. Although she is a very busy mom with four children, one of whom is an infant, Jill frequently volunteers in her son Maxton's classroom. Of course, Jill regularly schedules her monthly volunteer hours but the special thing about Jill is that she is a spontaneous volunteer. She sees a need and is there to help.

Jill is very attuned to the classroom and when another pair of (adult!) hands is needed: Jill always offers hers. With her infant daughter Jacey in tow, Jill moves about the classroom attending to the needs of the children.

Jill has an extremely soft heart for the children and is available to each one. Her generous gift of time and talent really helps to alleviate classroom commotion. Maxton is Jill's third child attending the WMFC preschool so Jill's volunteering goes back to when her eldest daughter Mikayla, now age 7 was in preschool. Her second daughter Callen is in Kindergarten this year.

Although Jill's volunteering has become the standard of excellence in the classroom, this is not the only place she chooses to share her talents. She also mentors other parents in WMFC's parenting programs. She has an excellent ability to communicate with children and she uses the same skills that she employs with her own children while interacting with other children. These are the skills she emulates for parents.



West Midland Family Center is an organization that greatly values the parental involvement in the lives of their children. As such, in "our book" there is no achievement greater than to positively impact the lives of children. Jill does this in so many ways. A parent that volunteers in the classroom sends a message to his or her children of the family value placed on education. Additionally, this type of volunteer help goes a long way toward enhancing the classroom environment because all children benefit when parents are involved. For this reason we commend Jill Derry for raising the bar for classroom participation and impacting the lives of little children. Her contributions clearly illustrate the Orrin Barrett standard for "Volunteer of the Year."



Anita Ramirez

**Anita Ramirez  
"Stephen Barstow ~  
Youth Volunteer of the Year Recipient"**

Anita Ramirez is kind and gentle, soft-spoken and very gifted with children. Over the past two years Anita has unselfishly dedicated nearly 600 hours working with the second through fifth graders in West Midland Family Center's Saturday evening program. She does

this because she wants to, not to fulfill an obligation and not even because someone has asked this of her. Anita simply cares: she especially cares about children.

One Saturday evening in 2003, Anita wandered into the Elementary Activity Room, sat down and began helping with the younger chil-

dren. Since that time, she attends consistently arriving in time to help staff members set up before the arrival of the children. Anita always displays an especially positive attitude of encouragement toward each young child. She is very creative and her flare for the artistic is modeled for the younger children. They in turn respond enthusiastically to Anita. She is an excellent role model in all she does, even demonstrating to other teens appropriate methods for working with younger children.

Saturday Night Activities at the Center are not just for the "little kids." There are a multitude of activities for teens as well, as such the time Anita spends volunteering could just as easily be spent hanging out with her peers. However in typical Anita fashion, she chooses to invest her time in the service of others.

Those who know her say that she is a nurturer by nature. A trait family members believe she inherited from her Grandmother. Which is why for four years Anita was content to put her own needs aside as she helped care for her ailing Grandma. And now with her free time she again chooses to help others. Anita is in the ninth grade at Alma High School. She looks forward to becoming a Social Worker one day, starting at a local community college so she can remain near to her close-knit family. Anita is a special volunteer indeed. For the many hours of service Anita has provided at the Center and the dedication Anita shows others, we proudly recognize her as the "Stephen Barstow Youth Volunteer of the Year Recipient"

## Look For These Friendly Faces At WMFC:



### Board of Directors:

Board President .....Bob Dostal  
Vice President .....Joe VanderKelen  
Secretary .....E.J. Herst  
Treasurer .....William Schmidt

Directors: .....Greg Bergtold, Rod Dishaw,  
Bo Miller, Larry Reeves, Bev Ruttan,  
Cheryl VanConant, Win Zacharias

Advisors: .....Jim Burlingame, Carl Coons,  
Ben Dollard, Thomas Misner,  
Chuck Norisez, Alan Oman,  
Dave Pellegrum

### Administrative Staff:

Executive Director .....Greg Dorrien  
Director of Programs .....Gail Crosby  
Financial Director .....Jason Green  
New Initiatives Coordinator .....Susan Love  
Office Manager .....Diane DeMott  
Administrative Assistant .....Missy Finney  
Receptionists . .Christy Chappel, Diane Dauer,  
Tyrell Ross, Cheryl Wolters

### Facilities Management Staff:

Maintenance Director .....Jeff Myers  
Maintenance Staff .....Gerald Burkett,  
Mike Kirby, John Tyler, Ryan Pedersen

### Family Development Staff:

Family Services Director .....Renee Young  
Family Consultant .....Lois Burton  
Catholic Family Services .....Larry Quinn

### Early Childhood Staff:

Preschool Teachers .....Clara Harrand,  
Wendy Plewa

Preschool Staff Eileen Burch, Barb Simons,  
Tierra Fort, Diana Laporta, Sheleigh Nicolai

Kinder Kare Site Director . .Melina VanConant

Kinder Kare Staff .....Liz Moore,  
Tammy Moore, Vivian McWethy,  
Sheena Spyker, Penny Owens,  
Rita Raab, Eva Searfoss

### Youth & Teen Staff:

Youth Program Director ....Stephanie Ponte  
Dow College Opportunities  
Program Director .....Lynn Heil

Teen Program Director .....Stacey Urbani

Tutoring Coordinator .....Heather Duchene

Youth and Teen Staff .....Stacie Anderson,  
Erin Birdsall, Jenelle Buda,  
Martina Campbell, Anna Copp,  
Tiffany Grinnell, Angela Hayner,  
Amber Heal, Keith Heal, Jennifer Justice,  
Stephanie Kawala, Megan Kochaney,  
Dave Matthews, Nathaniel Newsted,  
Kate Quigley, Danielle Roberts,  
Tammy Screws, Katie Shellnut, Joe Spencer,  
Jason Wade, Alaina Waldman,  
Mike Ware, April Wiltse, C.J. Wolters

### Activities and Instruction Staff:

Recreation & Aquatics Director ..Renee Allen  
Computer Class Teacher .....Peggy Hoff

### Senior Program Staff:

WMFC Senior Program Staff ....Susan Wells  
Council on Aging  
Site Manager .....Tammy Jerome  
Council on Aging Staff .....Sandra Engle,  
Barb Fenby, Marsha Orwig

\* Each staff member is listed only once although many serve multiple roles at the center.

# ENERGY CRISIS EXPECTED TO "HIT HOME"

It has begun. The barrage of phone calls from individuals seeking assistance to fill their home fuel oil tank. As of mid-November forty families had contacted the WMFC Family Services Coordinator for assistance with the first fill of the season. Many of these families ran out of fuel oil toward the end of the 2004-2005 heating season and didn't have the funds for a fill up. Rather than trying to fill up then (with funds they didn't have) they limped through the remainder of that season waiting until this fall to fill their fuel oil tank. Most unfortunate for them is that according to the Michigan Public Services Commission Home Heating Appraisal (published October 11, 2005) prices are currently up approximately 37% over what they were in March of this year for home heating oil. This will mean a \$375 increase this season over last season for the typical user. This among families that could not meet their heating need last year.

In an average heating season, WMFC receives from 60-100 requests for home fuel assistance. Referrals and follow-up are made to other organizations. As a rule, WMFC acts as a last resort for individuals who cannot get assistance elsewhere. And yet each winter WMFC Family Services

staff members are faced with the impossible task of deciding which families will receive assistance. With only minimal funding WMFC is left only to help those in the most dire circumstances.

If this winter's heating crisis plays out the way authorities are predicating, human services organizations will be swamped with calls from families desperate to heat their homes. Clearly everyone that was unable to pay for fuel oil last year will be unable to do so this year (unless, of course they've had dramatic change in their financial situation). In addition the rise in oil prices will impact families that have never been met with this type of financial crisis before.

So as winter and the Holiday season's approach, if you come upon a request to help fill a fuel oil tank or help pay off a family's Consumers Energy bill please consider doing so. This is an earnest request and although it may not seem like a very "fun" gift, it will likely go toward easing the mind of a concerned parent and providing for the health and safety of a family. There is no finer gift.

