

Seminar Teaches About Families Under Seige

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
MECHANICSBURG (Cumberland Co.) — "The family is under seige," Dr. James Van Horn told those who attended the seminar on Building Strong Families, held at the Holiday Inn, Mechanicsburg, on November 1.

Dr. Van Horn, who was the keynote speaker, teaches and writes about rural family stresses and strengths for Penn State.

A slight-built man with glasses, Dr. Van Horn, who has five children ranging in ages from 12 to 21, is a witty story teller who illustrated his talk with antidotes of families under stress.

"There are significant changes not only in the structure of the family but also in the norms whereby we live," Dr. Van Horn said. "Whether we subscribe to the changes or not, they are occurring. Stress accompanies these changes because people do not what is expected of them."

Add to the changes are figures that show that two-thirds of first marriages will end in divorce. In addition is the quest for time.

Dr. Van Horn gave the example of a male and female who walk up to the door side by side. "There was a time, when the man could have two grocery bags in his hands and somehow he was expected to grab

the door handle with his little finger and open it because that was the proper and expected behavior in that era. Today, neither the man or woman are sure who will open the door.

"If the couple hold to tradition, the male will lunge for the door and the female will step back. In another situation, the female will practically put her fist through the door because she is going to assert herself."

Each of those situations illustrate the 20 percent at each end of the spectrum.

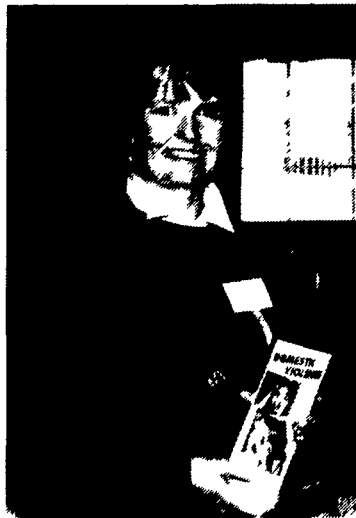
"In between are a whale of a lot of people who walk up to a door and wonder what to do," said Dr. Van Horn.

Situations such as these cause problems in marriages and with children because people do not have clear set of expectations laid out for them. This causes tremendous anxiety. What am I supposed to be doing? Lay on that pressure the enormous pressure of time.

The big issue in the '90s is discretionary time and the pressures that people feel, Dr. Van Horn believes.

"If anyone ran for Congress on the platform that they would create the eighth day of the week, they would probably win," Dr. Van Horn surmised.

Question of diversity also cre-



Bonnie Fowler

ates enormous problems in this country.

"We are moving close to a caste system. We have frozen people in poverty, and are close to establishing a formal or informal caste-like system that is creating helplessness.

"One in five kids is in poverty. In rural communities, we have 25 percent of children living in families at or below the poverty line," Dr. Van Horn said.

"We are dealing with an adverse set of family structures where 25 percent of children live in single families.

When two-thirds of marriages end in divorce, real-life kids feel



"There are pressures on farm families that urban families don't have and vice versa. Farm families are less inclined to seek professional help and are notorious for denying family stresses," said Dr. Van Horn, who writes a column on marriage and family strengths, which appears in 90 newspapers.

the stress of divorce. And the number of hours that mothers spend in attorney offices is astronomical trying to get child support.

"A lot of kids don't have parents.

In addition, Dr. Van Horn said that white American does not know how to deal with cultures from other backgrounds.

"We have a white privilege that we drag through life. If a white professional is at home and dressed in woodworking clothes when he needs to take his child with a cut on the face to an emergency room, the white American merely tells the hospital admissions clerk that the child fell down the steps. Because the professional has insurance, he can zip right in and out of the hospital. Take same situation, same

dress, same kids, but have a black or Asian American who has no insurance, has an accent, and that parents is highly suspect of child abuse.

"In the '90s, we must deal with differences, honor differences, and understand them. To do otherwise in families is to do a tremendous inservice to the world," Dr. Van Horn said.

One reason, children get short changed is that they are not at the top of the list. Work and recreation takes precedence over a child's place in the family.

Advocates parents spending uninterrupted time with children and teens. "Parents should appear so busy that they don't have time to spend with their children.

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Learn-At-Home Programs Offered

The following educational learn-at-home programs are being offered from Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Learn-At-Home: Program packages for busy people to subscribe for a minimal shipping and handling charge. These learn-at-home programs may also be picked up at the office with no charge.

Celebrate Your Family/Young Family - strengthening families with young children, includes activities for interacting and discussion: planning for a special activity, create a collage of feelings, speak in pastels, "imagine if..." make a family motto, and more. Cost: \$2.

9 To 5 Survival - Four lessons to teach kids how to be safe when alone, at home. There are ideas for snacks, instruction for simple clothing repair, fire safety, and safe practices for emergencies. Cost: \$2.

Children In Your Care/In Your Home - six lessons filled with activities, children's safety, tax tips and various topics of concern to Care Givers. Cost: \$2.

Celebrate Your Family/Teenagers - learn to build understanding skills with the developing adolescent; how to create opportunities for sharing; how each family member gains respect for others in the family; and to build in time to be together, and more. Cost: \$2.

Celebrate Your Marriage - activities and discussion to build strengths for middle-age couples. Topics include: Look at our Marriage, Develop a Survival Scheme, Caring Style, Mid-Life Transition, Resolving Conflict, and more. Cost: \$2.

Family After 40 - six booklets discussing Communication Skills, Physical Well-Being, Emotional Changes, Financial Help, Giving and Receiving Help, and Living Arrangements. Cost: \$2.

Celebrate Your Family Through Stories - for all ages families. This learn-at-home program helps build self-esteem. Cost: \$2.

Celebrate Your Family Through Recreation - for all ages of families. Helps for using recreational activities to strengthen family life. Cost: \$2.

Celebrate Your Family Across Generations - This series suggests ways to keep intergenerational ties growing, for your family is a group to which you will belong for your entire life. Cost: \$2.

Grandletters - bring grandparents and grandchildren closer together by an exchange of letters and simple handmade materials that share thoughts, feelings, and experiences through the generations. Cost: \$1.50.

To Live At Home Or Note - helps son, daughters, and parents review their options when considering a joint or separate household. Guide reveals issues to be discussed candidly - privacy, respect, expectations in an intergenerational living arrangement. Cost: \$1.

When Adult Children Live At Home - guidebook for families who have already made the decision to share a household. Helps suggested for a planning meeting to discuss personal needs, home management issues, and ways to maintain harmony. Cost: \$1.

Your New Life... Alone - A series of letters to help recently widowed, divorced, and separated adults cope more effectively with their emotions and daily responsibilities. Cost: \$2.

Creative Vegetable Cookery - a series of six lessons emphasizes increasing the variety of vegetables you eat; provides cooking tips and recipes, and explains the connection between diet and cancer. (Because of correspondence between the user and the office, this program has a set fee.) Cost: \$5.

"The Lite Eating Guide" - learn-at-home to recognize different types of fats; what foods contain fats and cholesterol; understand how food labels can help you eat lite, and how to eat lite in fast food restaurants. Cost: \$2.

Available At No Cost: Enroll to receive these newsletters.

Accent On Families: Bi-Monthly newsletters to Cumberland and Dauphin County Homemakers written by extension home economists. Topics include consumer issues, articles on nutrition and food safety, parenting and child care, the home environment, and ideas to help the sandwich generation cope.

Dear Mother/Dear Father - ni-monthly newsletter to parents of children ages 2 to 7.

Toddler Topics - Learn-at-home program for families with children ages 2 to 6. Four part series distributed in the spring of the year.

Dear Parent - monthly newsletter to parents of children 8 to 15 years old.

Off To A Good Start - A two year learn-at-home program for the parents of newborns. It is age graded and discusses all facets of the infant and family life during the first 24 months. Indicate birth-date of child.

Keeping Up - a monthly newsletter for seniors with information about housing, safety, nutrition, tax tips, intergenerational relationships, tips for shopping and more.

To receive any of the above programs, send your choice(s) along with your name, address, phone, and amount to either:

Penn State Cooperative Extension-Cumberland County, 1100 Claremont Rd., Carlisle, PA 17013. Checks payable to: Extension Service Special Fund.

—OR—
 Penn State Cooperative Extension-Dauphin County, 1451 Peters' Mountain Rd., Dauphin, PA 17018. Checks payable to: Agri. Extension Special Fund.



Mary Laeger-Hagemelster, right, chairperson for the seminar, said "We hope to learn to network to serve families better. We (Penn State Extension) don't need to get all the credit as long as families are being helped." Kay Pickering, housing counselor, is on the left.



Agnes Martinko, education Ph.D, left, explains the personality variances that are within families to Herb Bomberger of Salem U.C.C.