

letters to the editor

Priority is quality care

Dear Editor:

I would like to commend the editors and staff at the *Freeman* for choosing to address the business of childbirth in a recent, well-written article. I especially felt it was most appropriate to headline this piece in the business section of the paper, since childbirth is indeed big business.

As a clinical nurse specialist in women's health care, I would like to address some concerns I have related to this phenomenon.

First and foremost, I believe the physical environment in which a family welcomes a new member into this world has only minimal significance in terms of the overall childbearing experience. The presence of living room furniture, printed bed linens and such are lovely additions to any room, and certainly would help those who are accustomed to such surroundings feel more at home.

However, if a baby is born prematurely, or a mother begins to hemorrhage, the physical environment will, in the final analysis, be relatively insignificant.

That is not to say I would like to see us return to the days of birthing in sterile operating rooms or impersonal labor room areas. Nor do I believe that pregnancy and childbirth should be fraught with fear regarding potential complications.

I do believe that in our quest to meet the demands of the consumer for more humanistic health care, many providers of that care seem to have missed the point. The creation of a caring and supportive environment is not dependent on the color of the walls but the quality of the health care team. Certainly it is possible to have both decor and quality care.

However, I object to the marketing of health care related to childbirth which focuses primarily on the provisions of pleasant home-like surroundings. I am concerned that childbirth has become big business because it is women who are primary consumers in this market place, and women who are most likely to buy into this sort of sales pitch.

If we are going to market health care services — and I have no problem with that concept — then let's get competitive in terms of *quality of care*. There is no doubt in my mind that the combination of a full-time, experienced, educated and supportive nursing staff, working together with competent and caring physicians, are what makes the real critical difference.

The U.S. ranks only 14th in the world as a nation in terms of infant mortality. I seriously doubt that the thousands of dollars spent on building, remodeling and re-decorating obstetrical units will have any impact on these figures.

Let us get our priorities straight! Let us spend this money in areas such as education and quality staffing, areas which have the potential for improving health care delivery. In terms of business success, I believe that informed women and their families will buy into the option which offers the best service and the best outcome.

If we don't seriously consider our priorities, the consumers of health care for childbirth will eventually realize that all which glitters is not necessarily gold.

PATRICIA CAMILLO
Women's Health Care Coordinator
Hudson Valley Healthy Mothers-
Healthy Babies Coalition
Kingston

Shelter thanks firefighters

Dear Editor:

Spring has finally come to Ulster County, and the weather will at last permit us to move forward with repairs to the damage of the SPCA Shelter caused by the fire in December.

While we sustained considerable damage to the garage and storage room, we were extremely fortunate in that no one was injured and no one was lost. All animals were safely evacuated within two minutes by Shelter personnel and the many volunteers who came to help. It's heartwarming to know that, when put to the test, our evacuation plans worked swiftly and efficiently.

Police officer John Miller, the first on the scene, kept the fire in check, using the Shelter water hose, and undoubtedly was instrumental in keeping the damage to a minimum.

Ulster Hose Company responded very rapidly to our call for help, and with the assistance of fire companies from Hurley, Ruby, Glasco and Spring Lake, the blaze was contained in the garage and never reached the Shelter proper. The fire was extinguished rapidly, and we owe a debt of gratitude to all the volunteer firemen who helped us on that unfortunate day.

We thank Mr. Barnum for securing the building after the fire was extinguished, Mr. Palen for restoring the electrical service, and Kingston Sewer Cleaning Service for promptly hooking up our plumbing.

Kingston Oil Supply Company also rapidly restored our heat. The combined efforts of all these people put us back in business in very short order.

The Michael Larkin Insurance Agency and Hanover Insurance Company settled our claim promptly and efficiently, and Michael Sanders, public adjuster, was especially helpful to us in determining the extent of the damage.

There is someone else who will always be remembered in our prayers: the anonymous lady, a visitor to the Shelter that day, who first saw the smoke coming out of the garage roof and hurried into the office to give the alarm to our executive director, Catherine Shields. In our excitement, we did not get the name of this concerned lady, and hope she sees this letter and knows of our eternal gratitude for her swift action.

We thank all the residents of the community who expressed their concern and sympathy with gifts of animal food and other donations, and hope we have not inadvertently overlooked anyone who came to our aid in the crisis.

For a time, until all was resolved, we stood still. Now once again we move forward — returning to the residents of Ulster County even fuller and better services of their SPCA.

MARION MALASKY
President
Ulster County SPCA
Kingston

Hail, President Pinocchio!

Dear Editor:

If we are to believe him, Ronald Reagan has been losing a lot of sleep lately. Seems he's worried

policies toward the Soviet Union by offering a quote from Lenin that suggested he was bent on conquering the world.

Time to study U.S. history