



Sentinel-Standard/EMMA PALOVA

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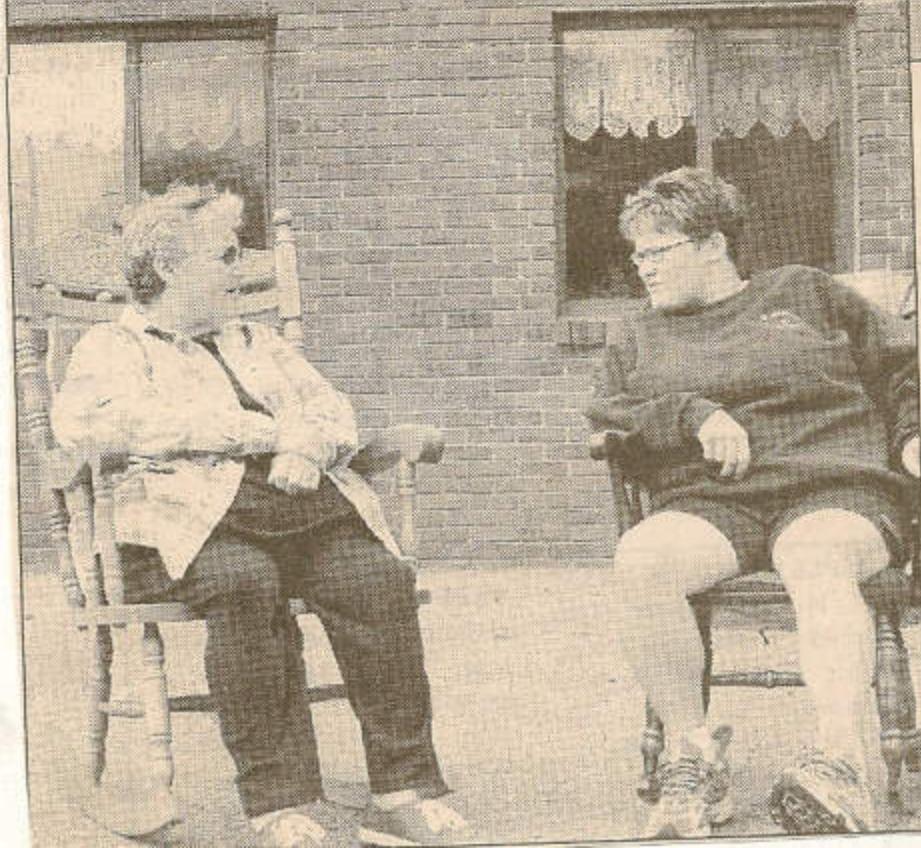


Ionia County Commission on Aging staffers Lorane Edwards and Wayne Conley receive a Type-O Blood Team Award from Arlene Christianson of the American Red Cross Great Lakes Region Blood Services

2003  
Goal  
\$23,000



MISSION ON AGING



The Ionia Community Band will again serenade walkers and rockers for the Ionia Area Crop Walk.

**Select a path right for you:**  
One mile mini-walk, a leisurely pace

Three-mile walk

10 Kilometer (6.2-mile) walk

or Rocking Chair

Lorane Edwards and her daughter, Lynn Edwards, have a heart-to-heart chat on rocking chairs outside Ionia County Commission on Aging as they prepare for the 2003 Crop Walk tomorrow.

# Helping seniors for 30 years

By **EMMA PALOVA**  
*Sentinel-Standard writer*

**IONIA** — The Ionia County Commission on Aging will celebrate its 30th anniversary March 29. The vision of independent senior citizens continues with its dedicated staff.

After 24 years together at the Ionia County Commission on Aging, a merry quartet still talks to each other. Lynette Seiler, Nancy Flinn, Lorane Edwards and Wayne Conley have shared the good and the bad, as life has served it over the years.

Sometimes only fragments of the past come to mind, at other times the big picture is readily accessible. The year 1986, was a big year for the commission on aging staff.

"We wheeled our stuff in carts from the Knights of Columbus into the new building," Edwards said.

That year, the county purchased the Hudson Street building, which was built as a livery and sales stable in 1895, for the commission on aging use.

"It had walls," Edwards laughed.

Edwards and Seiler used to

sit at desks facing each other.

"Some days we didn't speak," Edwards said. "We were so poor our secretary picked up paper clips off the ground between the courthouse and the annex."

Throughout the years, all the emotions and feelings have fused together into the strongest amalgam of caring.

"When I was dying, they laughed and laughed all night long," Flinn said.

They laughed to keep Flinn, who was dying of cancer, alive with optimism.

"I told her just don't hang up the phone," Edwards said. "All of us have learned to expect the unexpected and learn to deal with it."

They shared with Seiler her personal tragedy, when she lost her only son, Anthony Ramos, seven years ago.

"We also share joy, our own joy and our clients' joys," Seiler said. "We're a one big family. We care for our clients, for each one of them, personally. We want our programs to fit the client, not the client to fit the program."

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# Seniors

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Conley recalls when there were only 15 clients in Ionia County and eight clients for the meal program in Montcalm County.

Over the years, the meal program, which is the most successful program of the commission, has grown to 13,826 home delivered meals daily.

"The quality of life of seniors has improved tremendously, as we're looking at complex issues," Seiler said. "The aging population is the fastest growing sector. We're trying to keep them in their homes longer."

The other equally important program is the transportation program for seniors for medical related purposes.

"They go hand in hand," Seiler said. "They ensure independent living at home for our senior population. We're maintaining senior independence keeping them safe at home."

More than 250 volunteers and 65 employees help carry the vision of senior independence every day.

"We're a close knit group," Seiler said. "We are a family here. We are involved in the lives of our clients. If they have a need we try to take care of it and we celebrate all their joys."

There are joys in aging, like a full room of line dancers exploring dance steps for the first time, musicians jamming' up or seniors doing push-ups. It can be the joy of finding out

about an unknown skill or talent.

"There are joys of being blessed with good health, being involved in activities," Seiler said. "It's a good time in life that we can help celebrate."

The Ionia County Commission on Aging will celebrate with a wealth of activities including a spring salad bar luncheon on March 21. In April, there will be a birthday party for those age 85 and older. In May, a recognition event will be held with patriotic theme.

"I am proud to be a part of this organization dedicated to seniors," she said.

Seiler is director of the commission on aging, Flinn is in charge of the transportation program and Edwards and Conley work in the nutrition program.