

Dreams Unlimited celebrates 20 years

By Jerry Wolfe
For the Daily Tribune

ROYAL OAK — It took a federal lawsuit to get the Dreams Unlimited Clubhouse opened, but neighbors and the community have now accepted the people and program administered by Easter Seals Michigan.

Following a Department of Justice lawsuit, the Dreams Unlimited Clubhouse opened on Dec. 1, 1991, at 1222 Catalpa Drive. People with serious mental illness go to the facility for rehabilitation and to find ways to become productive members of society. They rely not only on the staff members located there, but also on each other to cope with each day's new challenges.

"When we chose to move

the program to Royal Oak several years ago, they (residents and city officials) didn't want us there," said Brent Wirth, president and executive director of Easter Seals Michigan. However, the Department of Justice intervened and the clubhouse was established.

"We've had zero problems ever since," said Wirth, indicating the existence of the clubhouse is breaking down the stigma attached to mental illness.

"We help the clubhouse members get back into society. They learn, gain skills and develop peer relationships and a bigger support network," he said. "The members are at a point of recovery where they are trying to get their skills polished to go out and work and be inde-



Ray J. Skowronek/Daily Tribune

Volunteer Bernadette Thomas talks with, from left, member Amber Mologianes, Dennis Wolke of Carnton and Ursala Warren of Consumers Energy Thursday at the Dreams Unlimited Clubhouse in Royal Oak, which celebrated its 20th anniversary Thursday.

pendent.
"Members and staff work side by side," he said, referring to such things as plan-

ning meals, activities and daily tasks.

Royal Oak Mayor Jim Ellison, Dreams Unlimited

members and staff and executives from Easter Seals Michigan and the Oakland County Community Health

Authority, which provides the funding, helped make Thursday's anniversary celebration a success.

The Dreams Unlimited Clubhouse is open Monday through Friday and on holidays. It also is wheelchair-accessible.

The estimated 150 people served at the facility each month also do maintenance work such as cutting grass, Wirth said.

Sometimes a person who had been going to the clubhouse and no longer needs mental health care returns to visit because "they have made friends with people there," Wirth said. "Sometimes the friends they meet become like family members. We know people who have recovered and come back to help others."