

# Michigan Nurses

Coventry Place, Suite G  
1637 W. Big Beaver Rd.  
Troy, Michigan 48084



# For Life

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## 2004 Prolife Events

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**SATURDAY, JANUARY 17 / 9:00 am-2:00 pm**

### **Prolife Morning of Reflection**

Guest Speaker: Helen Alvare J.D.  
St. John Center For Youth & Family - Plymouth  
For information or to register call (734) 414-1244

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 / 2:00-3:00 pm**

### **Rally For Life**

Madonna University, Livonia  
For information call RTL-Lifespan (248) 777-9090

**WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY, JANUARY 21-23**

### ***Join a Movement in Motion***

### **March For Life Bus Trip to Washington, D.C.**

Sponsored by RTL-Lifespan (248) 816-1546

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28 / 9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

### **2nd Annual Catholic Bioethics Seminar**

St. Mary Cathedral and Parish Hall in Lansing, MI  
Sponsored by the Catholic Medical Assoc. -  
Lansing Guild and the Natural Family Planning  
Program Diocese of Lansing  
For further information or to register  
call (517) 342-2587 or email  
nfp@dioceseoflansing.org



**Reserve This Date!!**

**Saturday, April 3, 2004**

## **MNFL Spring Conference**

**"The Abortion/Breast Cancer Connection"**

**Speaker: Angela Lanfranchi, MD**

**Call (248) 816-8489.**

**Co-sponsored by Educational Center For Life  
and Michigan Nurses For Life.**



**Check it out!**  
**MNFL Web Site**  
**[www.mnfl.org](http://www.mnfl.org)**



## **MNFL Mailing List**

Michigan Nurses For Life is updating their mailing list.  
If you would like to add or delete a name from our  
mailing list, please call the office at (248) 816-8489.

## The unfettered right to love, honor, and pull the plug.

Terri Schiavo is a married woman. Her husband, Michael, promised at their wedding to love her, to honor her, to comfort her, to keep her in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, and to be true to her as long as they both should live. After Terri was rendered severely brain-damaged due to hypoxia 13 years ago, Michael filed a medical-malpractice suit on her behalf. In his testimony for that lawsuit, Michael reaffirmed his devotion to his now-disabled wife: "I believe in the vows I took with my wife: through sickness and health, for richer or poor. I married my wife because I love her and I want to spend the rest of my life with her. I'm going to do that." The sympathetic jury awarded Michael \$640,000 for loss of consortium; Terry was awarded nearly \$800,000 to be used for her rehabilitation and lifetime care. Because he is Terri's husband, Michael has the authority to administer this fund and to make medical decisions regarding her care.

Less than a year after the money was in the bank Michael apparently suffered a little cognitive deficiency himself, because he seemed to forget all about his promises to his wife and to the jury. The plans for rehabilitative therapy that he presented to the jury were squelched. He had a do-not-resuscitate order placed on Terri's chart. He repeatedly denied treatment for infections that Terri suffered. He began to date other women, and currently lives with a woman who had a child by him. They are expecting another and plan to marry when Terri dies.

Terri's parents, Bob and Mary Schindler, objected to what they perceived as Michael's neglect of Terri's needs, so in 1993 they filed a petition to have him removed as Terri's guardian. Thus began one of the ugliest family feuds of all time.

Michael demands that Terri not be fed or given water, claiming that she told him before she became disabled that she would rather die than be dependent on tubes. He declares that Terri has no significant mental function, so it is up to him as her loving husband to ensure that her desire to die be fulfilled. Terri's parents say that they have known her a lot longer than Michael has, and they never heard her say any such thing. Furthermore, they claim that Terri is not a vegetable, and that she responds to their attention in a meaningful way. They want Terri to live, and they want her to be provided the rehabilitative care that was supposed to have been funded by the malpractice award.

Michael has prevailed in the courts. Even Michael can offer no evidence about Terri's wishes but his word, he is her husband; therefore, the courts have agreed that he should have nearly absolute control

over her fate, and her parents none at all.

Why did the courts accept such weak evidence as to whether Terri would want to be fed in her current condition? (If she did tell her husband what he claims she did, was it a well-thought-out opinion or just the sort of casual remark that healthy young people are prone to make?)

Michael wants to marry his current girlfriend but of course cannot as long as he is married to Terri. But if he simply divorces her he will no longer stand to inherit her property, including whatever remains of her medical fund (incredibly, the court allowed him to pay his legal fees from this fund, which was intended to provide care for his wife; he has already paid his lawyers nearly \$400,000 from it in his efforts to end her life.)

It seems odd that a husband with such questionable motives should be granted so much power over his wife's life. The case reminds one of the old view of marriage as the incorporation of the wife into the husband's legal and social identity: Married women had no independent rights. Feminists have been challenging this idea for more than a hundred years. Where are they now? Feminists for Life is the only feminist group to object to Michael's nearly total control over his wife's destiny. Regardless of one's opinion about what course of action is in Terri's best interest, the courts' given Michael such unfettered control ought to be a cause for concern.

The Florida legislature has given Terri a reprieve from her death by starvation, allowing for a little more time to sort out the wrenching issues illuminated by her predicament. I hope that Michael will divorce Terri and allow her parents to assume responsibility for her. They are convinced that with therapy, her condition can improve. Their belief is supported by recent research described in a recent New York Times Magazine article ("What if There Is Something Going On in There," September 28, 2003). This research suggests that "even after an injury that leaves a brain badly damaged, even after months or years with little signs of consciousness, people may still be capable of complex mental activity," and that "a vast number of people who might once have been considered vegetative actually have hidden reserves of mental activity."

This year, a man named Terry Wallis woke up after 19 years in a coma. His wife never gave up on him. If Michael is successful in his efforts to give up on Terri, we'll never know what surprises she might have for us. ----- Rosemary Oelrich Bottcher, a former president of the Board of Feminists for Life of America, lives in Florida. She is a former columnist of the Tallahassee Democrat.

## Michigan Nurses



For Life

### Our Purpose:

...To raise the consciousness of the nursing profession to protect all human life from conception until natural death

...To form an educated core of nurses who can speak for their profession by acting as a community resource for life issues

...To promote public education and awareness about life issues on both ends of the spectrum, from abortion to euthanasia

...To uphold and defend human life in all stages and conditions of development

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### Michigan Nurses For Life

Coventry Place - Suite G  
1637 W. Big Beaver Road  
Troy, Michigan 48084-3540

(248) 816-8489 - Office

(248) 816-9066 - Fax

Email: info@mnfl.org

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### Hours:

Monday through Friday  
10 am - 3 pm

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### Officers:

Diane Trombley, President  
Barbara Lubinski, Secretary  
Alice Maher, Treasurer  
Martha Jacobs, Membership

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### Board Members:

Ann Bellar  
Linda Seng  
Phyllis Sullivan  
Mary Lou Temple

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### Editor and Layout:

Susan Beardsley

## President's Perspective

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to say a word or two that relate to the main article in this issue of our Newsletter. Words mean things. That seems like a simple statement but often times we use certain words because they have become commonplace in our everyday language and we don't really appreciate their full meaning.

Take for example the words "vegetable" or "vegetative state". I find these words particularly offensive when used to describe the mental or physical status of a fellow human being. Those words, like the word "fetus" distance us from the humanity of those to whom they are applied. Fetus is a rather ugly word. It almost makes you think of something you might find under a rock rather than a living, heart beating, developing unborn child. Vegetable or vegetative state make it much easier for us to disregard the humanity of the person entrusted to us and simply "go through the motions" of their care. Personally, I have never bathed a potato, medicated a carrot or changed a dressing on a green bean. I am a nurse, not a greengrocer. I am always proud to be a nurse, but I am sometimes less than proud when my profession allows, even encourages, me to distance myself from my patients in this way. We all share a common humanity and are all worthy of respect and dignity. If we offer less than that to our patients, we become less ourselves. We may sometimes care for people with disabilities but we always care for people.

On a more joyful note---Christmas is coming!! Now, that is no surprise to anyone but you must all realize that I have had my tree up since Thanksgiving. I love Christmas. If you have little ones around you that makes Christmas all the better. One year, when my children were very young, five year old Mark and three year old Marcia went Christmas shopping with Daddy. When they returned, Marcia came to me, placed her finger on her lips and said, in a whisper, "We can't tell you we bought you slippers". Christmas is a magical time for children. If we try to see it through their eyes, it can be a magical time for us grown ups too. On behalf of the board of Michigan Nurses for Life, and myself, we wish you a Christmas and a New Year filled with the blessings of peace, the joy of hope and the love of Life.

Diane Trombley



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# Michigan Nurses For Life

1637 W. Big Beaver Rd., Suite G • Troy, Michigan 48084

December 2003

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*"An educational group for pro-life nurses."*

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## Care Options for Terminal and Disabled Children

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On January 13, 2004 at 7:15 PM, Michigan Nurses for Life will meet to hear "Care Options for Terminal and Disabled Children". Mary Christine Di Giovanni, RN, BSH, CRNH and Wendy Winckler, RN, BSN, CPN, CHPN, from Angela Hospice in Livonia will explain the philosophy and origins of the prenatal hospice movement, and share heartwarming stories about the impact on patients and families.

Barbara Lubinski, RN, MSN, Founder and Director of Precious Children Respite Home, the only licensed facility providing respite care for fragile children in southeastern Michigan, will share how respite care plays an important role in the lives of families caring for severely disabled children.

Meetings are held at Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Bloomfield Hills, on the northwest corner of Lone Pine and Telegraph Rd. Members of MNFL pay \$5; nurses who are not members pay \$10; the general public is free. 2.0 contact hours are offered for nurses.

## Citizen's Initiative Petition

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There will be a Citizens Petition Drive to insure that the Legal Definition of Birth Act becomes law.

The Governor of Michigan recently vetoed a measure that would have defined a live birth in Michigan. This measure would have prevented such things as partial birth abortion procedures in our state. In order to be sure that such protection will be given to unborn babies, signatures will be collected to require the state legislature to vote on the measure. Once passed, it cannot be vetoed by the Governor and will become law.

When all the approvals have been obtained and the petitions are ready, we will be asking that you assist in this effort by obtaining as many signatures as possible.

More information will be provided when all the legal requirements have been met.

## 2004 Meetings

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**January 13 at 7:15 pm** - Details in next newsletter

### **PEDIATRIC RESPITE CARE**

Barbara Lubinski, RN, BSN, MSN  
Precious Children Respite Home

### **PEDIATRIC HOSPICE**

Mary Christine DiGiovanni, Chairperson  
Ethics Committee, Angela Hospice

**March 9 at 7:15 pm** - Details in next newsletter

### **LIFESTORIES**

Dramatic reading and song portraying well-known personalities involved in the Roe v. Wade decision and its aftermath. Music by Pattie Ward - See enclosed flyer

### **PRO-LIFE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Diane Trombley, RN, BSN, President of MNFL

**2.0 CEUs are offered at each meeting attended.**

**Michigan Nurses for Life** meets bimonthly at Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Bloomfield Hills, on the northwest corner of Lone Pine and Telegraph.

**Fees:** MNFL member \$5; MNFL non-member \$10; general public admission free.

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