

Weekend retreat helps women

By Unsie Zuege

When Jennifer Morris married, divorce was the furthest thing from her mind.

"Who gets married thinking they'll get divorced?" said Morris of Eden Prairie. But, after eight years of marriage, she and her husband divorced in August 2005. She concedes that "I love my life now," and in retrospect, thanks her ex-husband, who initiated the issue. "We are two good people, just not good together."

But she didn't feel that way at the time. On top of the emotional tumult, "I had no idea of how to get divorced," she said. "I didn't have a clue. I found my attorney in the Yellow Pages. I picked someone who was close to my house. I wanted to say, 'Call me when it's over,' but I knew it wasn't the way to go. And once it was in process, I thought, 'I can't be the only person who doesn't have a clue.'"

When she married, Morris had hired a wedding planner. As she went through her divorce, she thought, "there should be a divorce planner."

The idea was so simple. She was surprised to find no one did it.

So she started "D"aisy Camp, a weekend retreat for women going through divorce. Women meet with professionals to learn what is involved with divorce, their options, and how to map out a plan for their future. The first one, held last March was such a success, she's had several more retreats, with inquiries for more. The next retreat is planned for Feb. 2-4, 2007.

"There are so many divorce-related decisions to make at a time you're least emotionally equipped to make the most important decisions of your life," Morris said. And if you make the wrong decisions? "It's very costly to change a divorce decree," she said. "There are no resources that are accessible in the same way (as when you're planning a wedding)," she said. "I was in uncharted territory. I was all by myself and emotionally overwhelmed.

"Where do I go? How do I get started? How do you find people who can say, 'here are some terrific resources?' Who can help women draw a blueprint for the rest of their lives?"

navigate divorce

Jennifer Morris

Home: Eden Prairie

Occupation: Realtor since 2002

Founder: "D"aisy Camp

Upcoming Retreats in 2007: Feb. 2-4; May 11-13; Aug. 17-19

Cost: \$275 per person, includes lodging, meals, workshops, and information binder

For more information:

Call 952-949-9292 or visit www.daisycampforyou.com



"D"aisy Camp?

"When you get divorced, you feel like you've got a 'D' on your forehead," Morris said. "Who wants to go to 'Divorce Camp?'" And, she added, "the daisy represents to me, a fresh restart. I thought, 'Let's have a place we can talk and gather.'"

Based on her own experience, and research, she found professionals in law, finance, counseling, real estate and mortgage banking, career planning, and other related areas to be presenters and offer information, advice and resources.

The first retreat was at the Emma Krumbie's AmericInn Lodge and Suites in Belle Plaine. It quickly booked to its capacity of 50. Women came from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Three

presenters are scheduled for Friday, nine for Saturday and three for Sunday. The weekend ends at 1 p.m. Sunday.

The weekend has a retreat sensibility. None of the presenters wear business suits or ties. There are no overhead projectors, there are no Power Point presentations. "Its strength," Morris said, "is the personal interaction."

Knowledge is power

"D"aisy Camp provides knowledge, Morris said. And knowledge is power.

"When you get divorced, no one is there holding your hand," Morris said. "An attorney can only do so much. There is grief and depression. It's like a funeral but that person is still there. If you have children, there is a whole par-

enting plan to create. How do you co-exist and co-parent? You're still a family but not living under one roof. And, for women who have been married for a long time, they need to find passion and purpose in what to do next. Divorce after decades of being a wife and mother can be even more difficult."

She thought the first camp would be the last one. She was wrong. She kept getting inquiries about the time and location of the next "D"aisy Camp, and before long, she realized, she'd created a business. To date, 250 women have participated.

"Participants have made terrific friends there," Morris said. "There are women who have had reunions since, and after their divorces, taken trips to Europe together."

"Who gets married thinking they'll get divorced?"

— Jennifer Morris, founder "D"aisy Camp

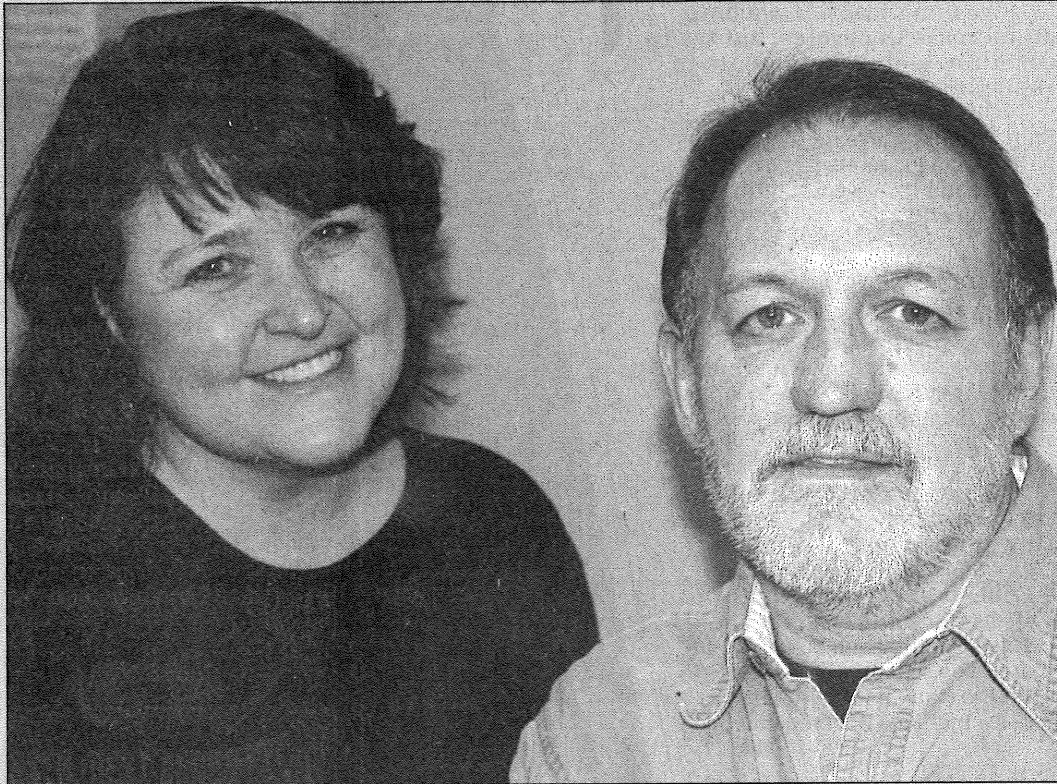


PHOTO BY UNSIE ZUEGE

When Barb Pearson of Chanhassen and Tim Davis, Eden Prairie, divorced a year ago, their collaborative divorce enabled them to remain friends, and keep their family healthy and stable.

Meet Barb and Tim

Barb Pearson of Eden Prairie and Tim Davis of Chanhassen have been divorced nearly a year. But their collaborative divorce, facilitated by Lynette Bledsaw, enabled them to maintain their friendship and ensure that their 18-year-old daughter would have two parents who demonstrated that their divorce was their issue and not hers.

In fact, Davis spent Thanksgiving with his daughter, Pearson, and her side of the family, just as in years past, and he still goes deer hunting with her brothers.

Pearson and Davis met more than 20 years ago, through mutual friends in a ski club. Each had been married before; Pearson had a son from her first brief marriage. Davis also had married young. Their first divorces were uncomplicated. There were few assets to divide; for Pearson, child custody was not an issue.

They were married in June 1985, and eventually had a daughter. Life was good, but in recent years, they both realized that their paths were going in different directions — they were different people, they had different life goals, their lives had changed.

"It was not a fun feeling being cranky with each other all the time," Pearson said. "We're happier since we got divorced. We still go out with the same friends, and we help each other out. Our lives took different paths."

They chose the collaborative divorce process not only because it was the least expensive way to go — it's not cheap, Pearson said, but it's also not \$20,000 — but most importantly, it enabled them to preserve their relationship and respect for each other. And, they didn't want to put their daughter in the middle. They also didn't want their friends and relatives to feel they had to take sides.

"People said they didn't know whether to say, 'I'm sorry,' or 'Congratulations,'" Pearson and Davis both said. "We didn't want them to say either. We said, 'We're OK. You need to be OK.'"