

Police chiefs top list of diversity honorees

The Farmington Public Safety Department and Farmington Hills Police Departments were lauded for their work with the Multicultural-Multiracial Community Council in the past year.

Gary Goss, Farmington public safety director, and Bill Dwyer, Farmington Hills police chief were awarded plaques of appreciation at the fourth annual Rainbow Recognition Awards breakfast Thursday.

Both police departments attend forums and workshops with the council and work cooperatively with racial and ethnic incidents have arisen in the community, according to council officials.

The council also honored 34 students and adults. Each honoree was nominated by their peers. The following is a listing of the honorees and their nominations:

Ami Bhatt is a student at Mercy High School and a member of the Multicultural Multiracial Council. She has demonstrated her willingness to share her culture with others and learn about theirs as well.

Dana Davis is a student at North Farmington High School. She has participated in food collection for a Pontiac food bank and represented the school in a Michigan State workshop on contemporary teen issues.

Student **Dominique Jackson** uses her amazing spirit and friendliness to create racial and cultural harmony at Harrison High. A cheerleader, this year's homecoming queen and member of the Student Round Table on Diversity demonstrates her ability to make students of all groups feel as if she represents the spirit and diversity at Harrison.

At North Farmington High School, **Monique Luse**, president of the Farmington Public Schools Student Roundtable, has used her high school career to emphasize the point that minorities can make significant contributions to racial and cultural harmony.

Students **Vicky Pittman** and **Sarah Van Buren** have been key players in the development of REACH, Farmington High School's diversity awareness group. They also serve as representatives on the Farmington Public Schools Diversity Roundtable.

Catherine Whitfield, a student at Mercy High School, is a member of the Human Relations Council and has demonstrated leadership during the Ethnic Bazaar. She organized the African-American Assembly last year.

Former director of the International Center at Oakland Community College, **Polly Meyers Bachrouche** currently serves as a parent volunteer on the Farmington Public Schools Diversity Committee. She is also volunteering as chairwoman of the Arrangements Committee for the upcoming Diversity Conference.

Sister Rene Bourque, RSM, is chair of the Social Studies Department and teacher of social studies at Mercy High School. She has proven herself as a bridge builder by teaching the class, "Melting Pot Myth," which examines the history, contributions, cultural traits and prejudices against the American immigrant.

Tatiana Chorny is a bilingual instructional assistant at Lanigan Elementary School. She has consistently extended herself to assist educators in connecting with families and facilitating home and school communication.

Cindy Clement, media specialist at Farmington High School, has made certain that her collection of materials reflects the needs of a diverse student body. In addition, she has sponsored Newcomers Club, welcoming students around the world to Farmington High School.

Nicole Crockett, Farmington High School math teacher,



Awards: Farmington Hills and Farmington Police Chief Bill Dwyer and Gary Goss, left and right, receive Chairperson's Awards from Karen Boisen and Jim Hall.

has made significant contributions as co-sponsor of REACH. She has participated as a panelist in the Multicultural Multiracial Council discussion on diversity and helped plan last year's Student Diversity Forum discussion.

Media specialist **Armando Delicate** has been a leader in schoolwide efforts toward diversity appreciation. In addition to developing a library collection sensitive to the needs of his student population, Armando has sponsored a series on various cultures for student assemblies.

Sister Regina Doelker, RSM, principal of Mercy High School, is a long-standing member of the Multicultural Multiracial Council Steering Committee. Through her leadership, Mercy's Human Relations Committee works to improve ethnic and racial education of students and faculty.

Jerry Fouchey, director of curriculum and staff development for Farmington Public Schools, supports the rights and dignity of diverse populations in our area. He chaired the Religion in Schools Study Committee, and is chairman of the Framework Committee.

Teacher **Joan Henkel** and Counselor **Jerry Kaplan** have successfully organized a student multicultural group that meets daily at Dunckel Middle School. Through their efforts, diversity awareness occurs on an on-going basis rather than just at special events.

Coaches **John Herrington**, **Bob Sutter** and **Mike Teachman** have used the athletic playing field as their tool to unite Harrison High School's diverse population. Racial and cultural issues become insignificant as these coaches strive to make each young man or woman responsible for their own achievements.

Bilingual instructor **Prenk Ivezaj** directs the Newcomers Center at Harrison High School. Administrators and teachers rely on Prenk to help understand and communicate with students and parents from all cultures. His students describe him as simply "the best teacher in the world."

Lasenia Jones is principal of Wooddale Elementary School. She is active in a variety of school district activities, including the Diversity Committee and planning for the Many Faces - One Future conference. She can always be counted on for wisdom and good sense.

Irene Kernleky represents the Council of Homeowners Association on the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council Steering Committee. For the last four years, she has been an integral participant on the planning committee for the Rainbow Recognition Breakfast.

Japanese teacher **Krista Newcombe** teaches a appreciation of diversity daily through her Teacher-on-TV program in the high schools. She also sponsors a language club at North Farmington High School that communicates regularly with Japanese schools.

Suhayla Odch has been a preschool volunteer in the Farmington Community School for 10 years and now serves as a part-time teacher there. She

created a regular multicultural family event at the school where families share food, conversation, photos and stories of their native lands. She also works as a volunteer translator for parents.

Pastor of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington Hills, Reverend Suzanne Paul is a long-standing member of the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council Steering Committee. She has served on the Programming Committee, successfully chaired the Rainbow Recognition Breakfast for the past two years and annually marches with the Council in the Founder's Festival Parade.

Parents **Lance Passi** and **Brenda Wilson** do not seem to work on diversity issues intentionally. But through their selfless work as parent activists at Harrison High School, they continually look for ways to serve the students of the school.

Dr. Berna Ravitz is completing her third year as principal of Wood Creek Elementary School. She has done a great deal to help her staff understand and effectively provide programs for Wood Creek's increasingly diverse population. She has also played a key role in the development of the bilingual summer program which began in 1998.

Theda Rucker, teacher at Mercy High School, has been active on the Human Relations Council. She assists students in seeking scholarships that are specific to their cultural and educational needs. She participated in planning for the joint conferences with the Farmington Public Schools on diversity issues.

Eugene Seaborn, principal for East Middle School, has done an outstanding job of helping the staff and student body to understand the complexities of dealing with an increasingly diverse adolescent population. He has supported staff members who have developed East's outstanding Mosaic Club, which has done much to stimulate the discussion of diversity.

Rajendra Shah is a parent volunteer with children attending Wooddale Elementary School. He currently serves on the district's Diversity Committee, having been an original member of this committee since its inception four years ago. He freely gives of his time to this committee which helps to establish the goals for the school district in this area.

Mark Spreitzer, media specialist at Beechview Elementary School, is a dedicated professional who opens his heart to children. He promotes cultural diversity by transforming the media center into a multicultural experience with literature and artifacts from all over the world.

Susan Zurvalec is assistant superintendent for staff and community relations, Farmington Public Schools. For the past two years, she has coordinated and chaired the school district's Diversity Committee. Most recently, the Diversity Committee has been an integral part of the coalition that is planning the first annual diversity conference scheduled for March 1999.

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- hosted by the Farmington-Multicultural Multiracial Community Council. Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss and Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer were the top honorees of the morning for contributions to multicultural understanding. Thirty-four students and adults also were honored.

If Josaitis had a prepared speech to give at the breakfast, she quickly put it aside following presentation of the awards. She asked the honorees to stand for an ovation. "It is an honor for me to be with you," she said, adding that through their example and leadership, "you are making the world a better place."

That's what Josaitis apparently wanted to do when she joined forces with Father William Cunningham to create Focus:HOPE on March 2, 1988. The organization's mission statement addressed the need for "intelligent, practical actions" to eradicate racism, injustice and poverty.

"That's what I am all about. We are making a difference and I know it," Josaitis told a full house at the William Costick Activities Center.

In less than 12 minutes, Josaitis told guests of the three lessons she has learned in her life with Focus:HOPE.

In the focus of the organization's food program for women and children, Josaitis received a phone call from a woman asking how she, too, could receive food. Josaitis commenced her diatribe about the program when she was



Speaking: Eleanor Josaitis, co-founder of Focus:HOPE was the keynote speaker at the annual breakfast devoted to community diversity.

cut short: "I'm 72 years old. Do I have to get pregnant to get some food?"

The elderly woman, who lived on \$308 a month and had no family, put Josaitis through the ringer. But it was a lesson learned. "She taught me how to listen to the fear."

A second lesson was learned when she and Cunningham traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby to include senior citizens in the food program. A particular Department of Agriculture official so irritated Josaitis, especially when he told her 4,000 gallons of milk were dumped into the sewer system.

Later the late Sen. Phil Hart invited Josaitis to lunch and talk about the agriculture official. Appealing to Josaitis' anger, "He said, 'you have got to learn to outsmart him.'"

The lesson? "You will always find a jerk in your life." The answer: outsmart your opponents.

The third lesson

was learning to communicate - listening with an open heart and learning to share your own experiences. Some years ago, Josaitis rang a small bell to get the attention of visitors at Focus:HOPE. She soon learned that one of the visitors took great offense to the bell.

"You're acting like a plantation owner," Josaitis was told. She spoke with the woman who complained. "I was dealing with good intentions, she was dealing with history. What it did was break down barriers of communication."

With lessons learned, Josaitis said she also has received plenty of gifts in her work with Focus:HOPE. While shopping at a mall, a man whom she had helped through the organization approached her. "I got a job. I bought a car. The kids go to school," Josaitis recalled him saying. "It was my greatest gift."

A woman who had participated in the food program looked up Josaitis to tell her that she went to school and now had a Ph.D. "That's what it's all about. Don't judge," Josaitis said, adding that some 280 seniors in the Farmington area also participated in the food program. "You don't know where life's journey is going to take you."



Intent: Catherine Whitfield and Ami Bhatt, Mercy High School students and recipients of Rainbow Recognition Awards, listen to keynote speaker Eleanor Josaitis of Focus:HOPE.

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