

Blanchard receives award in Hills

By Casey Hans
staff writer

'The great American dream of owning one's business is now the Michigan dream. One way for someone to get their feet wet is to start a franchise business.'
— James Blanchard, Michigan governor

It was an interesting pre-game show for Farmington Harrison High School's baseball team Friday afternoon, as the surprised group watched a Michigan State Police helicopter light on the hill behind the school.

Michigan Gov. James Blanchard exited the aircraft to chat with teacher and coach John Herrington before being whisked away by car to receive a business award at American Fast Photo and Camera at 13 Mile and Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills.

More than 50 residents, business leaders and elected and administrative officials crowded into the fast photo store as the governor received the 1985 Free Enterprise Award

from the International Franchise Association.

The award was presented by Vernon Buchanan, the Birmingham-based franchise founder, following remarks from Farmington Hills store owner Michael Liebaert.

Also on hand for the approximately 20-minute award presentation was Farmington Hills Mayor Joe Alkateb.

"THE GREAT American dream of owning one's business is now the Michigan dream," the Democratic governor — and likely 1988 incumbent gubernatorial candidate — told the group. "One way for someone to get their feet wet is to start a franchise business."

More than 500 franchises were

registered in Michigan in 1985 — more franchising activity than the state had during the previous 10 years, according to Blanchard.

A franchised business purchases the use of a company's trade name, its operating system and an ongoing relationship with the franchise company, which includes national advertising to promote the name.

In addition, a record 23,000 new businesses of all types began in the state during the past year. "It was not an accident," Blanchard said. "We are now the third (largest) in the nation for new businesses."

Blanchard was given the award mainly because of his contributions to promoting franchised business in the state, organizers said.

The award is given annually to a person in government, the media or academia who "contributes significantly to the American free enterprise system," according to literature. Previous awards have gone to Inc. and Venture magazines and Milton Stewart, former head of the U. S. Small Business Administration.

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in business for themselves, of controlling their destiny and lives," Liebaert told the group.

He mentioned the expertise and financial backing received from owning a franchise store. Besides the Farmington Hills location, Liebaert owns another American Fast Photo and Camera in St. Clair Shores.

"I would do this all over again in a minute," the satisfied businessman said. "The entrepreneurial spirit is running very high in the state."

Today, Michigan is rated as "one of the top" franchise states by the Wall Street Journal, Buchanan added. One third of the nation's sales are generated through franchise businesses; that number is expected to rise to one half by the year 2,000, he predicted. Before the changes in franchise law, Michigan was viewed as one of the worst franchise states, he added.

"With the enthusiasm and leadership... everyone's looking at this state as a real opportunity."

The International Franchise Association has approximately 600 member franchise companies, according to information presented.

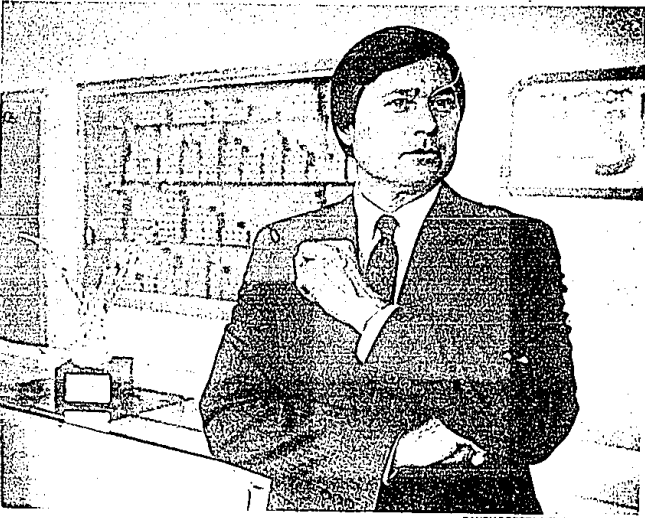
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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Gov. Blanchard was given the 1985 Free Enterprise Award Friday at American Fast Photo. More than 50 residents, local and government officials, and business leaders lauded his efforts on behalf of franchisees in the state.

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