



staff photo by SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Dr. Sudha Kini, a resident of West Bloomfield and a doctor at Henry Ford Hospital, talks about her experiences in the Detroit area. At left is Terry Klenzner, director of Adult Community Education for Farmington schools, and in the center is Cecilia Burt of Black Family Development of Detroit. Kini wears a traditional, colorful Indian sari.



Diane McMillan of Black Family Development of Detroit (left) laughs with Kiyo Morse, director of Stepping Stone at Mercy Center, as Morse shares a story about her children. Although a third generation Japanese American, Morse said she still finds herself acting traditionally.

Ethnic diversity

Seminar aims to raise cultural awareness

By Casey Hane
staff writer



Growing new roots
in Farmington and
Farmington Hills

IN HER MORE than 25 years practicing medicine in the United States, Dr. Sudha Kini has seen how far we've come in understanding other cultures.

She's also seen how far we have to go.

"When you think of India, what you think of is a snake charmer," the West Bloomfield physician told a group attending an "Understanding Cultural Diversity" workshop in Farmington Hills on Aug. 15. "We can solve these things only if we can understand each other."

Kini and representatives from the Arabic, Jewish and Japanese communities spoke to more than

100 Farmington-area residents and workers, in an effort to encourage better understanding of different cultures. The workshop, at Mercy Center, was sponsored by the Council of Community Resources, an umbrella group of 10 Farmington-area agencies.

KINI AND others related stories about the lack of understanding de-

spite the many advancements which have been made. For example, she dresses in a traditional sari for work which has been criticized by some who want to "Americanize" her.

"In the 25 years that I've worked at Henry Ford Hospital, I don't think I've ever gone to colleagues' homes," she added. "If we never go, how are we going to know what Thanksgiving is?"

She was proud to relate background on her homeland, where 80 percent of the population is Hindu, 15 percent Moslem and five percent other religions. The 31 states which make up India all have separate identities, she said. "It is like having Europe under one ruling. Ethnic diversity is so wide in India."

The Council of Community Resources sponsored the seminar because the ethnic diversity of the area is not evident, yet some people are not yet prepared to handle it, officials say. Kevin Bush, director of the Farmington Area YMCA and current head of the council said he was pleased to see more than 100 people register for the group's first cultural seminar — since they only expected about 40.

"Hopefully, we can find ways to absorb this richness and appreciate it," he said.

THE SEMINAR included discussion groups led by Kini, Mostafa Aswad of the Arab-American and Chaldean Community Council, and Steven Myers and Akiko Sakuma of Mizuki-Myers and Associates.



Mostafa Aswad (right front) of the Arab-American and Chaldean Community Council talks about his culture to a circle of Farmington-area people who live or work here. All attended a cultural awareness workshop to learn more about the ethnic diversity of the community.

Comments about the Jewish faith and culture came from Rabbi Ernst Conrad.

A keynote address came from Kurt Metzger, senior research analyst for the Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies and former Census Bureau employee.

The actual numbers of ethnic groups are tough to pin down.

"There's a fear" about answering questions for the U.S. Census on which many rely for ethnic data, he said. "There's a fear that people are using this information to get to these (ethnic) groups."

Councilman doesn't want chamber in association

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Ben Marks really doesn't want the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce involved in a business association of corporate and retail businesses along the two-mile Orchard Lake Road corridor in Farmington Hills.

"I don't think we need the direction of the chamber of commerce," said the Farmington Hills city councilman. "It seems strange to me we have paid no attention to Orchard Lake Road until I brought it up."

The Farmington Hills City Council Monday approved the idea of setting up an association for the businesses along Orchard Lake, from 12 Mile to 14 Mile.

But council members made it clear they want a better idea of what the association is supposed to do. That's expected to come after Marks and City Manager William Costick set up a meeting sometime in September with businesses along the thoroughfare.

"IN NO way is the chamber going to take over," the chamber president Linda Lynch assured Marks. "But I do agree it is a community situation."

Many businesses on Orchard Lake belong to the chamber. Marks spoke with about 25 busi-

ness owners and managers along Orchard Lake Road, he said.

"They all have the same complaint," Marks said. "They are ignored. Where were they in the Founders Festival?"

BUSINESSES ALONG the stretch need attention, particularly because they represent a portion of the city's tax base, Marks said.

The association will help generate enthusiasm and ensure that the retail heart of the city remains healthy.

"All the work will be done by the organization," Marks said. "But they need somebody to start the ball rolling."

Costick agreed. "The role of the city council is to authorize the initiating or the bringing together of property owners along Orchard Lake Road."

HE COMPARED Marks' idea with an earlier effort, the Orchard Lake Beautification Committee, which involved business owners and the city. Costick said such an association could "well serve the city's goals along Orchard Lake Road," such as traffic safety improvements.

"The merchants themselves have got to run this organization," Mayor Aldo Vagnotti said. But Marks said city officials, such as himself, have to get in there and get it moving.

ANYWAY, MARKS said, the chamber has appeared to be committed more to downtown Farmington than other areas, such as Orchard Lake Road.

"It pertains to our tax base. It's more important to us than downtown Farmington," Marks said. "All we're doing is protecting our own turf."

Councilman Jonathan Grant told Marks he didn't get the impression the chamber of commerce wants to take over the still unformed association.

But, "this is the place where this thing belongs," he said.

WHILE A couple of council members asked for more information, particularly a mission statement to detail the association's objectives, Marks pressed on for the association.

"There is no hidden agenda with this organization," Marks assured the council.

While the city council authorized Costick and Marks to get the association going, it hedged on allowing recycling banners to be erected along the roadway. Association members can discuss the issue, council members told Marks.

Recycling banners could be paid for with money from the city's solid waste budget for education. But if the banners are changed, the questions of who pays for new banners remains.

Farmington tables plan to curb skateboarding, rollerblading

Action on a law which would prohibit skateboarding, rollerblading and roller skating in certain parts of Farmington was tabled Monday, until city officials can confer with the Farmington school district.

Although Farmington officials introduced such an ordinance Aug. 5 at the district's request, the city council in neighboring Farmington Hills turned thumbs down to the request on Aug. 12.

Farmington city officials now want to talk to school officials to determine if they want two sets of

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laws — only a partial solution. If Farmington passes a law, only a handful of schools would be affected; most are in Farmington Hills.

"It does seem there should be continuity as far as the schools are concerned," said Farmington Mayor Shirley Richardson.

THE DISTRICT had requested city councils in both Farmington and Farmington Hills pass ordinances prohibiting such activities in school

parking lots and on school property after they received complaints about safety concerns. Such laws would allow police to go onto the property for enforcement without a specific school district request.

Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman said he would still recommend the city prohibit such activities in the city's downtown area, on city property and in private parking lots without permission because of concern to the city's pedestrians.

As proposed, the city's ordinance would also prohibit such activities on Farmington Public Schools properties.

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