

SUBURBAN LIFE

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THE REV. BREWSTER GERE

Council builds racial bridges

The Farmington-Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Council has an unwieldy name.

The council also has an unwieldy task: To sensitize our community to the growing diversity among our community's residents.

Is a multicultural/multiracial council necessary in our community? With 64 (that's right, 64!) different cultural groups known to be represented in Farmington-Farmington Hills, my answer is an emphatic "YES!"

Racism and claims of cultural superiority are diseases. Like poisonous microbes with no antibodies to counteract their insidious nature, they invade with great ease.

Racism invades

Once lodged in the human heart and soul, racism and claims of cultural superiority are like nails without heads devastatingly difficult to remove.

The council, as it is constituted today, came together in 1990 to seek tangible ways to make known that Farmington-Farmington Hills is a rich tapestry of cultures and colors.

With the belief that such variety enriches the fabric of a community, the council seeks in a variety of ways to find meaningful ways to foster the dignity of all who live and work in our community.

Composed of representatives from the schools, the city governments, the religious community and the community at-large, the council began meeting its charge with efforts that heightened awareness of our community's diverse nature among teachers, students, the police, city employees and the religious community.

Reaching out

In 1993 the council broadened its scope and offered the community two workshops, designed by the council and graciously hosted by the Botsford Inn. The focus of these events was to understand and value cultural diversity.

The council's goals include improving race relations in our community and improving the climate in the community.

Farmington-Farmington Hills might be known as a place that truly promotes inclusivity.

One way the council is broadening its outreach into the community is through a monthly series of community forums.

Diversified programs

Beginning this past November, the forums have centered on such topics as healing unwary racism, revisiting Martin Luther King's dream, getting to know about the Arab-Chaldean community, the availability of loans at low interest rates to people making pro-integrative moves into our community and the Oakland County Center for Open Housing's volunteer program designed to welcome families making pro-integrative moves.

The forums, which begin again in the fall, will be held the second Tuesday of each month from 8:00-9:15 a.m. at the Farmington Training Center.

Another opportunity for residents to share their views and learn from one another will be through salons, which are small-group gatherings in homes.

These gatherings will be aimed at creating relationships among neighbors whose points of views and values may be complementary or contrasting but always worthy of being heard.

As a recent meeting of the council's steering committee, one of the student representatives, whose valuable input we adult council members eagerly await each meeting, remarked: "Two years ago there were many more fights in my school than there are today. I want to ask you this: Is there more peace and understanding in my school and the community because of this council?"

Efforts count

My answer was "I believe each effort to set up a culture of acceptance has a positive effect."

Furthermore, the more individuals and institutions working to create a community whose values demand respect for everyone and tolerate racist behavior from no one, the more peace and understanding there will be in our community."

There is a saying: If you want to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk.

During this year's Founders Day Parade on Saturday, July 16, the multicultural/multiracial council will be walking as a symbol of our community's commitment to being a place that honors and celebrates its different races and cultures.

Come walk the walk with us by joining in the parade and by participating in our upcoming events.

For more details of the council's work and programs, call Ann-Theresa O'Sullivan at 615-1105.

The Rev. Dr. Brewster H. Gere is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Farmington. In addition, he is involved in a variety of community activities.



Table top publishing: For Marilyn Rowens, her kitchen table has been the drawing board for her more than 200 "Many-Lectures on the Human Condition" cartoons.

'Stick'-ing to her philosophy

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Marilyn Rowens feels close to the cartoon she draws, so much so that she has conversations with it about the captions.

But even with such closeness, she has yet to give the character a name. She is just "my stick figure."

"I'm not an artist," she said. "To put a stick figure on paper is not easy for me. I sort of have to imagine how she would do something then figure out how to draw it."

And a stick figure is just what the stick figure is - a simple face, set off by a mop of curls and eyeglasses, straight lines for a body and feet and squiggles for hands. She really is a young version of Rowens, only because her creator hasn't figured out how to give her gray hair. She did trim up her elf, though.

She can be found clinging to the world, also the logo for Rowens' Mini-Lectures Press, sitting cross-legged in the grass or swinging from the pendulum of a clock.

And while the drawings are simple, the captions are anything but. Her globe-hugging caption notes that "Aside from wars, catastrophic accidents, the relentless chase of unpredictable weather, murder, illness and death . . . the world is a wonderful place."

The cross-legged one reads: "Life is one big question! Who am I? Why am I? What are my goals? What is

my direction? Where am I going? And when I get there, so?"

As for the pendulum pose, "Life is like swinging on a pendulum . . . Very often you think you are going forward . . . but end up right where you started!"

'My inner child'

"She is an expression of my deep philosophy," said Rowens. "She's like swinging on a pendulum . . . relinquishing inner child. She's what keeps me young."

The 65-year-old Livonia resident began drawing her stick figure almost 20 years ago to include in the newsletter she has published monthly for the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills.

The newsletter comes out 10 times a year and after three years, Rowens gathered up the 30 cartoons and produced the first of her "Mini-Lectures on the Human Condition" in 1981.

"Everytime I feel I have enough cartoons, I do a booklet," she explained. "They're used for fund-raisers by the temple and I use them as calling cards."

Since then she has done four more of the 8 1/2-by-4 1/2-inch booklets - "It Doesn't Hurt When I Laugh" in 1983, "Beyond the Middle Years" in 1986, "O'World" in 1990 and "Life on the Not-So-Fast Track" published to celebrate her 65th birthday this year - with the help of her "partner in crime," her husband, Jack.

Rowens believes her cartoon creativity stems from being the ceremonial director for the temple for 27 years. She is responsible for the dramatic programs, services and holiday celebrations, which has led to the development of WE DO (Women Employed in Dramatic Outreach).

Rowens also is active in humanistic Judaism and is president of the Leadership Conference of North America. The organization has established a leadership training program to certify leaders and by completing the training, Rowens is able to officiate at weddings, funerals and baby namings.

"Humanistic Judaism is really cultural Judaism," she said. "It embraces all of the history, celebrations, holidays and all the cultural positives and celebrates them in a humanistic way so we feel the strength to solve the problems in our lives comes from within us."

Summaries made

As a leader in the movement, Rowens has done a lot of philosophical counseling. The mini-lectures, she said, are conclusions drawn, summaries made of that. They are an expression of trying to solve the problems of the world, "some with smiles, some with tears."

While Rowens has been drawing her stick figure for two decades, the stick figure was aware of her was in kindergarten. Her approach to the cartooning is to first decide on the caption then on what the stick figure is doing.

The captions get clear while I'm driving and then I sit at the kitchen table and figure out what the character is going to do. Once I have it in

my mind and have done it on paper, it's easy."

It may sound easy, but Rowens points out that if she didn't have a publication deadline, there probably would never have been a cartoon. Then again, there are those discussion she says she has with her stick figure about these captions.

"My stick figure in one cartoon said 'I am responsible for my own captions,'" Rowens said. "I developed more respect for her and realized that this was a growth process."

"A stick figure is universal; everyone can draw one. But then I decided that she's not a stick figure, but a cartoon, and she loves it."

When she first published the cartoon, people saw it as "cute and clever"; now they look forward to each new one. Some wonder how she comes up with new ones; others find them meaningful. For those who find them meaningful and say they "love them," Rowens gives them copies of her mini-lectures.

"My stick figure is possibly one of our philosophers," she said. "She appreciates knowledge, beauty, reason and all the wonderful knowledge shared in philosophy."

Rowens has as many stick figure cartoons as thoughts in her head, since they come from her thinking and being concerned about the world, and because they're an expression of being alive and being involved with life and relationships," she said. "And if I continue to deal with feelings and relationships, they will never end."

For more information about the Marilyn Rowens' mini-lectures, write to the Mini-Lectures Press at 28550 Fargo, Livonia 48152.

Pageant promises panache and pomp

Talent and beauty will be combined for an evening of delight beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 13 at Vladimiro in Farmington Hills when Julie Dugan will turn over her crown to new Miss Farmington-Farmington Hills.

The contestants are: Megan Smith, sponsored by L&G Insurance Group; Kara Spicer, sponsored by Bon Ton Shoppes; Julie Stockel, sponsored by Nancy White, the Plate Lady; and Kathi Fitzpatrick, sponsored by Contemporary Awards.

Other contestants are Sara Urvig, sponsored by Hair Impressions; Tricia Barnes, sponsored by Metro Bank; Theresa Kudlo, sponsored by Burger King; and Shannon Anderson, sponsored by Focal Point Studios.

Live entertainment will be provided by the sounds of TT Lock and Kathy Wince. Also a military color guard will add the pomp to the pageantry.

Pageant ushers this year are Team Farmington members and head coach Todd Lips.

Tickets will be available for \$10 at the Farmington Club and of Commerce. They will also be sold at the door on July 13 at \$12.



Sitting pretty: Julie Dugan, Miss Farmington 1993-1994, will turn over her crown to one of these contestants. They are (top) Sara Urvig and Theresa Kudlo; (middle) Kathi Fitzpatrick, Dugan, Tricia Barnes and Julie Stockel and (bottom) Megan Smith and Kara Spicer.