

Cable show deals with diversity

Tune into INFO TV-12 Tuesdays at 6 p.m. and get in "tune" with the spirit that lives in our community concerning cultural diversity and awareness.

CABLE CONNECTION



MARY LINDA CALDERONE

You'll be watching taped sessions of the Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council of Farmington Hills. This is an organization that works to assure that all residents of our community enjoy a harmo-

nious, healthy environment and that they feel welcome and comfortable in their cities, schools and neighborhoods. The Multicultural/Multiracial Council is dedicated to promoting awareness and acceptance of diversity in our community.

Representatives from the Farmington Public Schools, students, the Farmington and Farmington Hills city governments, the religious community and other interested parties meet monthly. All members of the community are welcome (for more information, you may call 473-9500).

In addition to its monthly forum

series, the group has sponsored workshops and discussion panels and established the first-ever Rainbow Recognition Awards last January.

Speakers have included Police Chief Lesiah McKinnon, the Rev. Charles Adams and Father William Cunningham as well as leaders from the Jewish, Arabic and Native American communities.

You won't want to miss the Multicultural/Multiracial's kick off rally with Diana Lewis, Channel 7 News Anchor. Diana's speech is indeed an uplifting one commending the council for its work. In this special program, Karen

Bolsen and Jim Hall, co-chairs of the council expound on a draft of guiding principles for maintaining a healthy, diverse community.

Through the end of the year, Bolsen states, "we'll be working with focus groups in the community to get feedback on the draft of the guiding principles."

After the first of the year, the principles will be presented to both city councils and the school board.

Bolsen adds, "This is your community. We are taking a proactive stance in promoting cultural awareness. Attend the monthly meetings."

Catch them on INFO TV-12, or, if you like, stop by both Farmington public libraries and check out a copy of the programs.

The next SWOCC meeting is 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 19, at Farmington Hills City Hall.

The next CAC meeting is 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 12, at SWOCC.

Mary Linda Calderone is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

Siena Literacy Center's program adds up to success

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

When Freda Vassar failed to pass the math section of the entrance exam for Focus: HOPE's machinist program, she contacted the Siena Literacy Center in Redford for help.

Ten months later, volunteer math tutor Donna Jeziorski of Bloomfield Hills thinks Vassar's determination will ensure the 40-year-old Detroit mother placement in the program.

Located in a wing of Bishop Borgess High School, the nonprofit center provides free one-on-one tutoring services for adults.

"I had a tough time with math in high school. I never did enjoy it because I didn't understand it but with the help of Donna it's even kind of fun," said Vassar.

The Siena Literacy Center opened last October under the direction of Sisters Mary Hammen and Mary Kastens. A project of the Adrian Dominican Sisters, the idea originated after a similar program run by the order for eight years at Dominican High School in Detroit. Presently there are between 50 and 60 students enrolled at the Redford center, which rents space from Bishop Borgess.

"We decided if there's a need on the east side, there's one on the west side as well."

"I suspect there are a lot more who could be helped by the center. If you know someone tell them about it. Don't be afraid to admit you need help with a reading or math skill to enrich your life," said Sister Hammen.

"Our students are people of all ages from their 20s to retired people who need to brush up on math and reading skills, people between jobs, people looking to advance in their jobs, people who are learning disabled, displaced homemakers.

"Some say they just want to be able to read to their children. They're concerned about their children finding out they can't read."

Funded by the Adrian Dominican Sisters, the center initially sought and received grants from Community Services of South-east Michigan and the Archdiocese of Detroit along with contributions from private individuals and area churches. As with all nonprofit organizations, the center constantly needs to attract volunteers. Hours are flexible as the center is open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"We're looking for people will-

ing to tutor 1 1/2 to 2 hours a week at their convenience in the areas of reading and math. No previous experience is needed. In fact, it sometimes helps. If a person wants to teach, they can do it. It's very satisfying lending a helping hand to someone who can't do what you can do," Sister Hammen said.

Louis Finger of Farmington Hills began volunteering his time at the center in March. A retired Chrysler engineer, he also is a volunteer at St. Michael's Catholic Church in

Southfield as well as for other organizations such as F.I.S.H.

"It's fun watching them make progress but it's a shame we have to do this because they're apparently not getting the education when they should be," said Finger, whose wife Rene will begin tutoring students next week.

"Having eight children, I did a lot of teaching. I like helping people. It's what makes life worthwhile, so you feel like you have a purpose in life besides enjoying yourself," said Rene

Finger, who also volunteers in the poverty program and library at St. Michael's.

"The tutor maybe even gets more than the students. It's the reward, the stimulation of all these people who want to do more. It inspires," said Jeziorski. The Siena Literacy Center, which uses the Laubach Reading System of teaching, holds periodic training sessions for new tutors. For information call (313) 532-8404.

ment in the church paper published by St. Hugo of the Hills in Bloomfield Hills.

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Ethiopian Israelis tell about travels, travails

BY LARRY PALADNO
STAFF WRITER

When the "Children of the Dream" spoke to the children of Akiva Hebrew Day School, it became clear the Ethiopian guests had suffered some nightmares before being able to realize their dream—a life in Israel.

Four Ethiopian Israeli teenagers addressed the Akiva students last week in Lathrup Village, but one of them, Yael Azala, had to choke back tears and cut her talk short because of tragic flashbacks.

She was just 7 when she and thousands of other Ethiopian Jewish children were airlifted to Israel under the now-famous "Operation Moses" in 1984-85, the predecessor to the 1990 airlift "Operation Solomon."

Her mother didn't make it out. Neither did her brother. They died in Sudan, the nation to the west of Ethiopia, as did hundreds of others who trekked there to participate in an escape network. They hid in the Sudanese desert while awaiting an airplane to whisk them away to Israel. Hundreds of Ethiopian Jews were murdered and many more died of starvation along the way.

Azala's father did make it out, but he died in Israel.

"There are 1,500 kids in Israel from Ethiopia without parents," said Babu Yaacov, the Ethiopian Israeli chaperone for Azala and the other teens: Navn Kebede, Mulaw Yaacov and Assaf Mola.

The group visited the United States in a cultural project sponsored by the Michigan regional office in Southfield of the Anti-Defamation League. The ADL sponsored a similar program two years ago.

Babu Yaacov didn't dwell on it, but he has his own bitter memories of his homeland: "My wife was 15 when she was tortured in Ethiopia. They tortured her feet. She has scars on the bottom of her feet."

In Ethiopia, he told the students, native Jews never could own land and were looked upon by fellow Ethiopians as

strangers.

"They used to call us some bad names," he said. "They thought that at night they (Jews) grew tails. If you say you're a Jew you're in trouble. Some think if a Jew looked at you would get sick."

The visit to Akiva was the final stop among six area schools for the group in a trip that began Sept. 30 and concluded Monday. Southfield-Lathrup High School entertained the group Tuesday with a singing group and band. The Children of the Dream also visited Oak Park, Berkeley, West Bloomfield and Detroit Renaissance high schools in a program chaired by H. Adam Cohen of the ADL.

Four Akiva high school students served as hosts for the Ethiopian Israeli teens for their entire stay: Georgette Kleiman, Josh Skari, Aliza Hochbaum and Shlomo Winkler.

Babu Yaacov, who stayed at the home of Michael and Terry Dworkin of Southfield, addressed the Akiva students in both Hebrew and English, but the teens spoke in Hebrew.

"It was very enjoyable, really interesting," said Georgette, 16, who had 19-year-old Nava stay with her. "I got to communicate with her and see how life was in Ethiopia and in Israel. Our ages are different, but we have some things in common. And she could help me with my homework and Hebrew subjects."

Rabbi Karmi Gross, principal of Judaic Studies at Akiva, provided some background to the students about the guests and conducted a question-and-answer session afterwards.

"It's more than fascinating to hear stories we've only read about," Gross said to the students.

"Many times we don't realize and appreciate what we ourselves have. One of the most amazing stories of our time is the story of the Ethiopian Jews. Can you imagine meeting a brother and sister you haven't seen in 2,000 years? That's really what happened with the Ethiopian Jews."

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