

**Cultural struggle**

# Club plays important role for Hispanics

Suburban Hispanics try to keep their language and culture alive through a 30-year-old club which meets regularly at Oakland Com-

munity College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

The next meeting of Los Buenos Vecinos — the Spanish Good Neighbor Club — is at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 in Building J, Room 306; it will be conducted in Spanish.

"We present it all in Spanish," said Rudy Vaquera, the club's vice president. "We don't care to talk too much English, unless the speaker gets into a jam."

THE CULTURAL club was founded 30 years ago to promote Spanish culture, language and arts in southeastern Michigan. The

group's 150 members, according to Vaquera, are American-born Hispanics who "moved out to the suburbs and left their Spanish behind. They're a little bit more of the middle class and up," he added.

Many, like Vaquera, an equipment supervisor for an Oak Park construction company, grew up in the Corktown/Tiger Stadium area of southwest Detroit, where the bulk of the poorer Spanish-speaking population still lives.

Club members, says Vaquera, "get together and make use of our Spanish language. They don't use it unless they get in the group somehow."

The club was formerly based in the Gabriel Richard area of Detroit and in Dearborn. A section of the club now meets in Grosse Pointe, for the east-siders, Vaquera said.

CHARLES BRAUN, head of the foreign language department at Orchard Ridge, estimates that at least 100,000 people of Spanish-speaking descent live in the metropolitan area, the vast majority in Wayne County. Pontiac has the largest Hispanic population in Oakland County.

ings, where students can "meet someone else who knows five words more."

Music, dancing and other cultural presentations are sponsored by the group. At next week's meeting, Vaquera will demonstrate tortilla making. He learned the skill "way back in the days when I helped my mother grinding corn with a stone."

The group's membership fees are \$6 per family, which doesn't include occasionally sponsored trips. The meetings are held every third Thursday of the month on the Orchard Ridge campus.

For membership information, call Charles Braun at OCC, 476-9400 ext. 447.

## County house sales still on the skids

Sales of existing houses in January were down 38 percent from a year ago, according to the Western Wayne Oakland County Board of Realtors (WWOOCBR).

The state's largest board showed January statistics of 604 residential sales, compared to 972 last year. Last month's sales were 47 percent lower than January 1979.

"Most potential buyers don't have enough confidence in the economy to enter the market," said Robert D. Shimmin, WWOOCBR president.

"Before committing to a long-term investment, buyers await greater assurance of steady employment and a decreased rate of inflation

that now is raising home operating costs and eroding their buying power."

Shimmin said high mortgage rates continue to scare many would-be buyers. The rates may decline to about 13 percent later in the year, he said.

The board's January statistics show a vast majority of houses being sold through other than conventional financing. Nearly 43 percent of sales were through land contracts while another 30 percent relied on mortgage assumptions. A year ago, each of these financing methods were used in about 20 percent of sales.

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