

# Deep roots

## County helps minorities maintain ethnic identities

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

Growing up black in a white neighborhood can mean losing your roots. To help avoid that, Oakland County is putting together a book of activities to help racially isolated kids keep in touch with their identities.

Black identity activities and historic sites are included in the project, which is just one of several undertaken by the county's Office of Community and Minority Affairs.

"There has been a lot of progress for minorities in Oakland County as well as the rest of the country," said director Joan Newby.

"But it hasn't been without a price. Now housing is available to anyone, but often it means isolation."

**WORKING FOR** Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy, the director of community and minority affairs handles a wide variety of projects.

Newby focuses on concerns of the county's 4-percent minority population largely blacks, Hispanics and Arabs — as well as on women's issues.

Her efforts range from festivals displaying ethnic art work and music to Black College Night, Student Government Day and even working on minority entrepreneurship. One completed project is a book on presidential attitudes toward race.

"We do still have in this country a situation where all things are not equal," said the Pontiac resident.

**'There has been a lot of progress for minorities in Oakland County as well as the rest of the country. But it hasn't been without a price. Now housing is available to anyone, but often it means isolation.'**

— Joan Newby, Oakland minority affairs director

"Even when the economy is stable, there is a special need as long as we have racism and sexism. Some government officials feel they have to respond to it."

Negroes in my plays."

"That's when I determined to do anything and everything I could," said Newby.

**BATTILING RACISM** has been a lifelong commitment for Newby, who grew up in the small steel town of Atchison, Kansas.

While her hometown was biracial, blacks lived in their own neighborhoods. Instead of attending nearby schools, they traveled to a central segregated one.

Atchison High School was integrated, but members of the small minority were discouraged from taking part in student activities. Only because of a supportive choir director was Newby able to solo in the school chorus.

After she unsuccessfully tried out for school plays, an English teacher told the would-be actress, "I do not have

**ANOTHER** encouraging college director helped the talented soprano earn a Kansas State University music scholarship.

Her appearance as lead in the musical "Araby and Mehtabel" packed the house for every performance. It was the first time the school had ever had an integrated cast.

After earning a bachelor's degree in music education, Newby gave up plans to become a performer. Instead, she opted to teach vocal music in Wichita.

"It was a more secure job, and I wasn't prepared to deal with the racial pressures," explained Newby. The sole black choir member recalled sitting on the school bus with one student while everyone else went into a roadside restaurant to eat.

"That's the devastating thing about bigotry — how it affects the lives of those growing up."

**WHEN HER** husband Robert got a job teaching classroom music in Pontiac Schools, Newby came to Oakland County 20 years ago. She landed a teaching position with Highland Park Schools.

But when Robert was named regional director for the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in Battle Creek, she taught English to youth employed by the Job Corps and developed a Head Start Center.



An aerial photo of downtown Pontiac is examined by (left to right) Al Callawaert, QT Rail's director of industrial and resource development;

Joan Newby, Oakland County director of community and minority affairs; and Jose Santiago, who directs the Pontiac Growth Group.

DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

At Stanford University while her husband finished his doctorate in sociology, Newby taught at a junior college and studied for a master's degree in education and media studies.

"I was going to take the advertising world by storm," she explained with a smile.

**AFTER RETURNING** to the Detroit area, the mother of two worked in claims with Michigan Employment Securities Commission.

Through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), she learned about the Oakland County executive's new office geared to minorities and women.

It was an exciting opportunity which she still sees as a daily challenge.

"Using ideas I saw in both the private and public sectors, I was able to mold the job myself," said Newby, whose guidelines from Murphy were "I have a lot of faith in you."

"I'd never done that job before, but I

knew the kinds of things that needed to be done."

**WORKING WITH** a small budget of only a couple thousand dollars, Newby tries to allocate the funds for projects that will serve the greatest numbers of people.

Concerned about becoming "just a public relations" person for the county executive, she has made it a point to find out what's going on in the community.

"I want to know what's going on — really participate," said Newby. "And I felt I had to be more of an advocate for people's needs."

Named by a Pontiac club to the Pontiac Economic Development Corporation, she now chairs the group committed to revitalizing the city.

Jose Santiago, director of the Pontiac Growth Group of which EDC is part, said she has done an excellent job of

directing policy.

"Under her direction, we have in essence become a development agency. She has really expanded EDC's scope."

She also worked hard to set up Haven, the area's first domestic violence shelter.

"All I knew was there was a need that crossed over economic and racial lines," Newby explained.

**HER FUTURE** plans include replacing the Hispanic staffer who did translation out of the Office of Community and Minority Affairs. The previous translator left and was not replaced.

As well as improving the programs she now offers, Newby would also like to expand services.

"I think in community relations we can go into any problem area, whether minority or not," said Newby. "We've done well with the minority efforts and can now broaden out our offerings."

**Battling racism has been a lifelong commitment for Newby, who grew up in the small steel town of Atchison, Kan. While her hometown was biracial, blacks lived in their own neighborhoods. Instead of attending nearby schools, they traveled to a central segregated one.**

## Tax cut premature — Adamany

Discussions about the size of Michigan's budget surplus are based on "very early and still risky revenue projections," Wayne State University President David Adamany said.

Thus, it is still too early to decide in favor of a decrease in state income taxes, Adamany told the Michigan Chapter of American Association of University Women.

"During the past two years, Michigan has made long strides toward restoring its system of higher education," Adamany said. "But it still has a long

way to go. Under these circumstances, it would be premature for the state government to roll back income tax rates until we have a better assessment of the size of the state's revenue surplus."

**IN THE LAST** two years, he said, Gov. James Blanchard and the Legislature have added \$70 million above the inflation rate in new appropriations for higher education.

"Our situation is gradually improving," said Adamany, who was once commissioner of revenue in Wisconsin.

He argued that the current debate raging in Lansing over the income tax rollback could affect higher education's future.

Much of the debate over tax rollback hinges on widely differing estimates by the House and Senate fiscal agencies about the size of the probable budget surplus, Adamany said.

Senate Republicans want to roll back the personal income rate to 4.6 percent this year. Blanchard wants to adhere to the schedule of rolling it back on Oct. 1, 1988.

Everyday Low Discount Prices

# ACCENTS for less

NEW  
ARRIVALS  
DAILY

- Convenient Parking • Free Gift Wrap • Bridal Registry
- Mail Orders • Phone Orders: 642-6655
- We Accept American Express • MasterCard • Visa
- Dinnerware • Flatware • Table Linens • Lamps
- Crystal • Stemware • Brass & Wood Accessories
- Gourmet Appliances • Cookware
- Waterford • Spode • Mikasa • Noritake • Rosenthal • Braun
- Royal Doulton • Hummel • Lladro • Onelida • Lenox • Mirro
- Oster • Cristal D'Arques • Landes • Pfaltzgraff • Anchor/Hocking



**SAVE OVER \$6 ON EACH PIECE OF LOVELY MIKASA GIFTWARE**

Exotic holloware giftware from Mikasa adds contemporary crystal-look accents to the home. Choose the generous ashtray or lovely serving bowl in "Cascade" design; or the beautiful buffet platter in smart "Palm Beach".

**9.88**  
Buffet Platter  
Reg. Price 15.95

**6.88**  
Ashtray  
Reg. Price 12.95

**9.88**  
Serving Bowl  
Reg. Price 15.95

ON SALE MARCH 21 THRU MARCH 23

Accents At 223 W. Maple, Downtown Birmingham  
Open 10-5:30 Mon., Tues., Wed., Sat.; 10-9 Thurs., Fri.; Closed Sunday

EASTER



*Focus* on the  
"Easter Bunny Arrival"  
Fashion Parade  
March 22 and 23  
7 p.m., Friday  
12 and 2 p.m., Saturday  
South Grand Court

**FAIRLANE**  
TOWN  
CENTER

HOURS: 10:00 A.M. TO 6:00 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY  
10:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. SUNDAY AND HOLIDAYS

Focus on the best selection of Easter merchandise you can find anywhere in town.

Focus on the greatest gift of all for Easter... choice! A Fairlane Town Center Gift Certificate good at every shop & store, available in the Information Booth.