Ethnic task forces help boost community

er a problem erupts. The group larts out strong and dwindles in

starts out strong and dwindles in numbers.
Quite the opposite is true of the Birmingham-Bioomfield Task Force og Race Relations and Ethnic Diversity.
When racial problems erupted at local schools last year, this task force was already in place to help deal with them. And a group that started out small and while to open the area, to minorities has grown in numbers and diversity.
Members first set about educating themselves – confronting their own prejudices.

themselves — controtting their own prejudices. Monthly meetings included watch-ing a Bill Cosby video satirizing pre-judices; hearing a successful black attorney deplet the frustration of the black male in our society; discussing

the film "Do the Right Thing" by black filmmaker Spike Lee; and exploring reacial steering in housing.

The emphasis was on black-white relations. But this week, they moved on to deal with the largest non-white minority in the area — Asians.

minority in the area — Asians.

MORE THAN one of every 10 students in the Bloomfield Hills School District is Asian, said Bloomfield Hills Superlientednet W. Robert Docking.

Docking served as moderator for a panel Monday morning at Birming-ham's Community House. The panel featured members of the Asian-American community.

The 30-member audience heard Labser Junior Bob Park, a Korean, tell how when he moved to Bloomield Hills from Mount Clemens he experienced racial prejudice for the



In middle school, "I fought a lot," he sald, "My dad said, beat them with your grades' " but that wasn't enough.

BOB HAD his own methodology—he continued to excel in school, play an instrument—do all the things Asians have the reputation for, he said.

But he added sports — football, wrestling, track.
"People started to accept me in high school. In high school people

high school. In high school peopue grow up."

Now his most difficult problem is that his parents say he's losing his ethnic background.

Allison Ordona, a Lahser senior, moved the audience as she toucning-ty told how the school's annual mul-ti-cultural retreat helped her deal better with the different signals she receives from her father, a Filipino, and her American mom. and her American mom.

SHE ALSO made them laugh when asked about dating outside her Asian background. "If my dad said you have to date a Filipino I'd be looking high and low." Do you mind that Americans look at you and don't know which country

you are from? a member of the audience asked. Fellicitas Coniconde, a Filipino-American teacher, answered no. "There is such a difference between (the look) of a Korean and Chinese," Paul Yook, another Lahser student from Korea, said.

JUDY CHEN, a Chinese resident of West Bloomfield, said her son, now a pre-med student at UCLA, was teased and called "chink" and "slant eye" as a child.
"He lived through it, but he is still say of meeting new people.
"Prejudice exists wherever people exist," she said. "We need to shed more light on the subject. Instead of avoiding it, action, open discussion should take place. The people of Bloomfield Hills are beginning to understand."

WHICH MAKES me wonder why all our communities don't have such task forces. The minority population is rapidly increasing in our suburbs and in our nation.
Meanwhile, a recent University of Michigan study of our suburbs shows more prejudice exists, not less.
"We are all more alike than different." Chen said. We all want to love and be loved, to try to do the best we can and we all have family traditions.

tions.
"I'm proud to be Chinese," Chen said. "and I'm just as proud to be an American."
It should be more than the people of Bloomield Hills who are beginning to understand.
Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Engler no back-room partisan manipulator

FOR A FARM boy, state Sen, John Engler gives Detroit a suprising amount of thought. And for a guber-natorial candidate, he keeps an unusually sharp oye on Eastern Europe. Engler, R-Mount Pleasant, is seeking to make Michigan a state that encourages enterprise in all areas of business.

business.

As the campaign progresses, he will draw a sharp line between his vision of expanding small businesses, particularly in inner cities, and Gov. James Blanchard's propensity to "play favorites" with the Michigan Strategie Fund and Commerce Department promotions.

ENGLER QUOTED a black, female, Democratic, Wayne County commissioner, of all people, when I bumped into him recently. He loved what Alberta Tinsley-Williams was telling her Detroit constituents about the need to start their own businesses. She organized a sammer youth project called "Buddies in Business" and said in her newsjetter:

newsletter:
"The greatest growth and security
will come to those courageous
enough to step out on their own and
provide a needed service . . . There
are various groups ready to assist
you in developing your business plan.
1 would urge you to dust off those

burled dreams of owning your own husiness. Shine that dream with preparation, and let's move into the business of taking care of business."
Zawie! The lady sounds like Cail Coolidge (1925) asying. The busines of America is business."
Or maybe like the Persian proverb: "Go and wake up your luck."

A COUPLE OF weeks ago. I out-lined Engler's think tank book called 'Building Entrepreneuria Michi-gan.'' Economist Gene Heek ad-vanced a long list of ways to help small businesses start and expand, including a mandatory high school economies course stressing business enterprise.

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enterprise.

Engler is unwilling to go as far as
Heck in mandating the curriculum,
but he blinks Heck is on target in encouraging business planners and risk
takers.

"The community colleges should
teach such courses to people who are
managerial," Engler said. "We
should try to work with them more. I
see community colleges as being
more effective at that.
"It (the spirit of enterprise) is the
kind of thing we need to export to
Enstern Europe. People are willing
to give their lives, around the world,
for market economies," he said.

He's right. In the West Bank and



Tim : Richard

Gaza Strip last fall, one of the most frequent complaints I heard from Palestinians, besides plastic bullets and tear gas, was that the Israeli military authorities wouldn't grant them licenses to start businesses and hones

ENGLER CITED the Cubans in Miami, the Hong Kong immigrants to the west coast of Canada and the Vletnamese of San Diego as examples of people with the spirit of enterprise who quickly achieve prosperily in a strange land with a new language.

perity in a strange land with a new language.
Engler, as I said, grew up on a farm and studied agricultural economics in college. But he has spent much time learning inner city economics.

muca time learning inner city economics.

His think tank advocates a pair of ideas you wouldn't expect to hear in Michigan from an outstate Hepublican:

• Get rid of the property tax abatements for the silk-stocking.

Engler, R-Mount Pleasant, is seeking to make Michigan a state that encourages enterprise in all areas of business.

multinational corporations — you know, 50 percent off for 12 years — that suburbs have been whipsawed

Set up "enterprise zones" in the

poorest neighborhoods — narrow targets, virtually tax free — to pro-vide local products and jobs so peo-ple can lift themselves by their own bootstraps. It's a Jack Kemp idea

that is just radical enough to work.

To hear my brother political writers tell it, Engler is a conniving, back room partisan devoted to machinations and manipulations. That sells him short. The man has learned substantive things in his econ classes and from the books he has commissioned.

Tim Richard is news director of Suburban Communications Corp. News Service. SCC is the parent company of the Observer & Ecentric Newspapers.

know your government

Looking for information about state government? The League of Women Voters has a toll-free telephone service 800-292-5823) that may helpful. none service (1-that may be

The league's Citizen Infor-mation Center in Lansing offers

to help people find out about such things as pending legisla-tion, the state constitution, election laws, volting regula-tions or tax information.

The telephone is answered from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

weekdays.

The telephone service is paid for by the league's education fund. The League of Women Voters is a non-profit organization that works to keep voters interested and informed about governmental issues.







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