

'Count your blessings,' local leaders urged

By Noreen Fleck
staff writer

Modern times require a hectic schedule for community leaders. But they were told Tuesday that before getting discouraged, "count your blessings."

More than 170 people attended the 23rd Community Leadership Prayer Breakfast, sponsored by the Farmington Area Jaycees, at the Botsford Inn, Farmington Hills.

"Our prayer breakfast allows people of the community to come together and count their blessings," said John Sule, Jaycees president.

"It also gives us a chance to express our gratitude to the people and businesses that have helped us in the past."

Gary Jonna, vice president of Jonna Construction in Farmington Hills, was guest speaker. The Farmington Hills zoning board of appeals chairman said everyone must contribute to the health and welfare of the community.

"Life is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and you usually get what you expect in the long run," he said.

"We are all motivated by our currently dominant thoughts and move in the direction of that which we dwell upon. That is why it is important to dwell on the rewards of success and not the penalties of failure," Jonna said.

FARMINGTON HILLS councilman Terry Sever served as master of ceremonies.

He credited the Jaycees for dedicated community involvement — Founders Festival projects, the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, the Easter egg hunt, the Halloween haunted house, youth and elderly assistance.

Jerry Ellis, a Farmington Hills attorney and parks and recreation commissioner, was named Distinguished Citizen for his volunteer work with community youths.

"It's no wonder why thousands of kids in our community call him 'Uncle Jerry,'" Sever said.

Ellis has coached soccer and baseball teams since 1977 and has volunteered for many parks and recreation activities. In 1989, he became president of the North Farmington/

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West Bloomfield Baseball Association.

"There are a lot of community leaders here, and I just want to say that when you plan your community activities, don't forget the kids, because they can't step up and they don't have the money to support their ideas," Ellis said.

BOTSFORD GENERAL Hospital, celebrating its silver anniversary in Farmington Hills, was named Distinguished Business for offering continued community service. The award was accepted by hospital executive Ed Barter.

Botsford has received several community beautification awards and has participated in the Founders Festival and Farmington Hills' year 2000 planning project. It sponsors a Halloween Party that last year drew 4,000 kids and parents.

Outstanding Service awards for continuous support to the Jaycees were given to 11 businesses: Hartford & Hatfield Inc., Gallagher Fire Equipment Co., Structural Coatings, Metrovision, Goes Sales, Browning Ferris Industries, the Swedish Club, Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Company, Your Attie, H. A. Smith Lumber and Supplies and Clam Diggers Restaurant.

Frank Rashid of Farmington Hills received an Outstanding Service award for allowing the Jaycees to turn a building he owns into a haunted house for Halloween.

THIS YEAR marks the Jaycees' 70th anniversary as a national or-



Gary Jonna was the guest speaker at the prayer breakfast.



Jerry Ellis was named Distinguished Citizen.

ganization and its 43rd anniversary in the Farmington community. Their prayer breakfast is patterned after the presidential version held in Washington.

The local prayer breakfast was instituted in 1968 by veterinarian and former mayor John Richardson, Farmington Mayor Shirley Richardson's husband.

Mayor Richardson recalled assisting her husband with the invitations for the first prayer breakfast and said no women were invited that year.

"It is really nice to see so many women community leaders in attendance today," Mayor Richardson said. "For me, that is a great pleasure."

Mayor Richardson declared Jan. 21-27 as Jaycee Week in Farmington. She said the Jaycees are "a vital

part in the development of our young leaders."

Farmington Hills Mayor Pro Tem Aldo Vagozzi, who announced a similar proclamation for his city, attended the breakfast on Mayor Jean Fox's behalf. He thanked the Jaycees for "bringing us (community leaders) together once a year to count

our blessings."

The Farmington Hills Harrison High School Choral Department provided entertainment. Rabbi Ely Spectre of Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills delivered the breakfast prayer. The Rev. Kean Cronin of Our Lady of Sorrows in Farmington gave the benediction.

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