



photos by SHARON LEMUEUX/Staff photographer

A cross section of ethnic groups makes up the Farmington Multicultural Choir which, under the direction of Farmington High School teacher Jan Brachel, sang at the program in early April.

Several choir members are (from left) Ashish Panchal, Rachel Dubuc, Laura Conception, Eric Szymanski, Tracey Takella, John Cechoz, Peter Dumadag, and Tim Fzymanski.

Recalling their roots

Harrison program parades area's cultural diversity



Larkshire Elementary second graders Morahia Cunniff and Agim Sabaj demonstrate an Albanian folk dance.



Tracy L. Parker, a sophomore, transforms into the Queen of Sheba from northern Africa.

"There's so much that we share That it's time we're aware. It's a small world after all," — from the song "It's a Small World"

By Casey Hans
staff writer

IT WAS a night to recognize the many cultures of the Farmington area, and a time for some to recall their roots. "When I went to elementary school, we learned all kids could grow up to be President — then we were told on the side everybody but Catholics," said Farmington school Superintendent Michael Flanagan.

"That soon ended," he added, talking about religious persecution of the Irish Catholics and how proud he and his family were when fellow Irishman John F. Kennedy made it to the White House.

Flanagan told a crowd of hundreds at a recent multicultural event about his family's struggle to come to America from Ireland in the 1800s



and make something of themselves. "We even had a group who tried to keep us out," he said. "My grandparents were told 'no Irish need apply.'"

THEN FLANAGAN brought the message back home to the peoples of Arabic, Albanian, Jewish, Spanish, Scottish and other descents who filled the Harrison High School auditorium for the annual Farmington-area "Celebration of Our Diversity" on April 2. "I can assure you that a future president will be African American, Albanian or another," he added.

This is the sixth year such a multicultural event has been held in the Farmington school district, and the



Mercy High School students Anandini Sekhar (front) and Valahali Shah join in the public school celebration of cultures. The Rajasthani dance is a tradition from southern India.

first year it has been hosted at Harrison High. This year's celebration was sponsored by the Farmington Public Schools and the Multicultural Community Council, a group represented by government, business and religious groups.

Officials from throughout Southeast Michigan and the state attended the event, as well as many families. Featured were entertainment and food of the many cultures represented in the community.

This year's program included a skit showing a traditional Chaldean marriage proposal, a Middle East historical lesson and fashion show, a rendition of the traditional Mexican hot dance and many other traditional

dances and songs. "One of the great joys for me is watching the great cultural diversity — that mosaic" which makes up the Farmington community," Flanagan said. "The most important thing we have as a nation is our cultural diversity. It's our strength."

Haroun Alameddine, bilingual director for the Farmington school system, said Farmington was preparing to welcome some 13 new students from Japan and the Middle East the week following the cultural event, additions to the growing number of people of varied descents moving into the area.

"We have new students coming in every day," he added.

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