

Diversity

Each of us must do our share

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Dr. Martin Luther King
I Have a Dream speech
Aug. 28, 1963

Some people, such as human and civil rights activist Eleanor Josaitis, co-founder of Focus:HOPE, have spent their lives working to ensure that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dreams for America come true.

Josaitis, keynote speaker at the annual Rainbow Recognition Awards Breakfast Jan. 28 - hosted by the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills - lauded the 34 students and adults who were recognized for their efforts in promoting awareness and acceptance of diversity. Also recognized were Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss and Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer.

"It is an honor for me to be with you," Josaitis told the honorees. "You are making the world a better place."

Nothing could be more true. Too often we wait for words of wisdom from the well-known and in some cases, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, the martyrs of our society, who give their lives to create change.

But as evidenced by the honorees recently, there are plenty of others - less well-known people - who share the same heartfelt intentions as those whom we consider leaders in a similar cause.

These honorees are testament to the fact that many small acts of understanding and open-mindedness, as well as sincere curiosity about others, can go just as far in promoting an openness toward diversity, as can an organized and public effort.

To take a peek at the reasons why these adults and students were nominated for awards speaks volumes on the understanding these people have for other cultures, races and religions.

RAINBOW
RECOGNITION AWARDS

Just one example is Mercy High School student Ami Bhatt, a multicultural-multiracial council member, who was nominated for an honor because she is a "caring, compassionate person who has demonstrated her willingness to share her culture with others and learn about theirs as well."

That's all it takes to open the doors to understanding. We must remember who we are and where our families came from. Too often in our modern society we forget that our families were not unlike those who are now emigrating from Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

It is time to give the same understanding and welcome that our ancestors wished they had received when they arrived in America seeking a better life for their families.

Despite this country's prosperity, educational system and technological advancement, we remain in many cases a segregated society - between the haves and have nots, and the various classes that we attempt to assign people based on their racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Little more than 30 years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, families continue to struggle for respect and freedom - and all in the land that has been long touted as the "Melting Pot."

But it is organizations such as the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council that put a spotlight on our need to create a healthy environment for all community members.

And it is individuals, such as this year's honorees, who are setting a standard and an example for how we need to open our hearts and minds, and accept others who may be different than us.

Engler: Some good, some bad

Our news reports on Gov. John Engler's Jan. 28 State of the State address concentrated, naturally, on his plan to use tobacco settlement money for \$3,000 scholarships for every kid who passes the MEAP proficiency tests. Engler had other proposals, mainly good, some bad.

GOOD: You missed it if you watched TV, because the ailing governor cut short his speech. He is seeking to prevent misuse of genetic and personal medical information. Specifically, genetic testing must not be a precondition for obtaining health insurance. And genetic testing must not be allowed as a precondition of employment, he said.

Voters rejected an initiative that would have regulated physician-assisted suicide, and the Legislature passed pain-management bills. "So to build on what we've done," the governor said, "I will appoint a Commission on End-of-Life Care." No details, but clearly he's trying to blunt the demand of some for aid in dying.

QUESTIONABLE: Engler quoted Democratic President Bill Clinton with approval for saying that "all states and school districts must turn around their worst performing schools - or close them down" and was cheered by Republicans.

Unfortunately, Engler called for raising the lid on the number of charter schools - among the worst performers in the state. He needs to understand that many of his charter schools are bad and should be shut down.

GOOD: In 1990, when candidate Engler was asked about "urban sprawl," he greeted his questioner with a blank stare as if the person were speaking Sanskrit or Swahili. He has changed, apparently, saying, "As we work together to implement Clean Michigan (the voter-approved bond issue), save farmland and reduce urban sprawl, we will make sure that Michigan's rich legacy of natural beauty and well-managed resources is preserved for future generations."

No details, but at least he isn't equating "sprawl" with "growth."

HOPEFUL: The governor's budget isn't due until Feb. 11, but we hear there will be more money for a Jobs Commission program of grants to community colleges for information technology programs. Oakland and Henry Ford community colleges have received \$5 mil-

lion apiece. Schoolcraft and other fine community colleges were shut out in round one. Maybe they'll do better in round two.

The governor seems fully to have absorbed the lesson that "career development, including on-the-job training, apprenticeships in a skilled trade, or high-tech training at a community college or university" is every bit as important as agricultural economics, his own college major. Bless him.

PROBABLY GOOD: Engler promises to produce a formula to make sense of how we fund our 15 state universities. We haven't seen it, but we know the Legislature gets into donnybrooks over the higher education budget bill every year and hasn't been able to produce a formula. The universities are of little help - e.g., Oakland and Eastern Michigan produce plausible arguments as to why they're underfunded, but they don't agree on a proper mechanism.

DOUBTFUL: The governor wants to empower the mayor of Detroit - who already has a full plate with snow removal, trash pickup and bad housing - power to change the governance of Detroit public schools. Why did he leave out the services of the State Board of Education, which is constitutionally empowered to supervise all K-12 public schools?

Suburbanites don't need to be reminded that if he can "do it" to Detroit, he can do it to Pontiac, Flint, Lansing and any school district in the state.

BAD: Engler's nasty attacks on the State Board of Education continue. We observe:

■ Once state voc-tech training was in the Department of Education. Engler moved it to the Department of Labor. Then he shut down the Department of Labor and moved it to the Jobs Commission. This year he wants to move the Office of Workforce Development out of the Jobs Commission and set it up as a separate department. No. Workforce training logically belongs in the Department of Education.

■ Engler invited the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals to his address. But although half his address was on education and making Michigan "the smart state," he didn't invite the elected, constitutional State Board of Education. It was a malicious snub. It's no wonder so many public school people distrust him, even when he does many good things.

Making a better world



STAFF PHOTO BY DEB DRESLER

Honored: The Rainbow Recognition Award recipients are Polly Meyers, Bachrouche, Ami Bhatt, S.M. Rene Bourque, RSM, Tatiana Chyorny, Cindy Clement, Nicole Crockett, Dana Davis, Armando Delicato, S. Regina Doelker, Jerry Fouchey, Joan Henkel, John Herrington, Prentice Ives, Dominique Jackson, Lasenta Jones, Jerry Kaplan, Irene Kernicky, Monique Luse Krista Newcomb, Suhayla Odeh, Rev. Suzanne Paul, Lance Pesci, Vicki Pittman, Theda Rucker, Eugene Seaborn, Rajendra Shah, Mark Spreitzer, Bob Sutter, Mike Teachman, Sarah Van Buren, Brenda Wilson, Catherine Whitfield, and Susan Zurvalec.

LETTERS

Many helpers

The 1998 Goodfellow year has come to a close, and our pledge of "No Child or Senior Without a Christmas" has been completed. It all happened because of the great volunteers (elves) we had helping this year. The greater Farmington area is truly blessed with people who want to help others.

As we all know, the economy was good this year, and the numbers were down, but still there are many families and seniors in our community that need help. We delivered packages and gift certificates to 136 families, and 119 seniors, and assisted 30 disabled adults.

We want to thank many people again this year, especially the folks that helped us sort can goods, packed toys, made out gift certificates, delivered packages, sent out thank-yous, and of course those who made donations of food, toys, and money through our "All Community Mailing." There are 15 standing committees to do the work, which include more 120 people. I want you to know that the people of F2C (Farmington's Two Cities) are committed to helping others.

Each year we have outstanding volunteers, and this year is no exception. First, we have Bob Chappell, our warehouse manager, who spends many hours each day, for three weeks to oversee the operation. Then there is Lisa Ellis, who is chair for our Thank-You program. She supervises the sending of over 1,500 thank-yous to donors. What about our Treasurer Aleta Bame, who spends countless hours watching over our financial matters? And we can't forget Beth Hogan for recording and depositing the donations, and Frank Grady for the great job with publicity and picture taking.

We get many cards and letters from recipients each year thanking everyone who helped make their Christmas a happy one. Some of the notes we get tell of situations and problems which most people can't imagine, but for the elves, it makes the time and effort worthwhile.

All of us on the Board of Directors want to extend our most heartfelt thanks, to all those who helped this year. We hope you enjoyed what you did, and will consider helping again next year.

We trust you had a wonderful holiday and that the new year will be good to you.

Richard Tupper
president and general chairman
Farmington Area Goodfellows

The 'they' are us

Just finished reading Tim Richard's article regarding state aid for private schools. And as much as I've tried to understand what he had to say, the very first word "they" stuck in my throat. "They didn't wait to start the great propaganda war for state aid to private schools." And I wondered just who the "they" were.

■ Does "they" refer to people like my mother and father who paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes over their lifetime to support public education and hundreds of thousands more to send their children to schools where they knew they'd get a better education?

■ Does "they" refer to the increasing number of parents who, while they still pay taxes for public schools, have become so turned off by public schools that they'd rather teach them at home?

■ Does "they" refer to people who have children in public schools, but worry about lack of discipline, lack of academic standards, and would like to be able to choose another public school?

■ Does "they" refer to people who would like to use their own tax money to support their own children's education.

■ Does "they" refer to people who feel that they should have choices where to spend their own tax money for education like they have choice in what cars to buy and where to live?

Getting past that first word, I found out that "they" referred rather to the radical right who pay no taxes and use gimmicks and propaganda to cover up their real motives of destroying public schools. Turns out that Tim Richard is as perceptive as Hillary Clinton, who also warned us about this group.

Edmund Starrett, Ed.D.
Livonia

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to (248) 477-9722.

Farmington Observer

JOANNE MALUSZEWSKI, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450
SUSAN ROSKE, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149
HUGH GALLAGHER, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2118
PEG KNOESPEL, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 248-901-2177
LARRY GIEGER, CIRCULATION MANAGER, 734-953-2234
STEVEN K. POPE, VICE-PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER, 734-953-2252
RICK FIORELLI, MARKETING DIRECTOR, 734-953-2150

HOMETOWN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JEANNE TOWAR, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RICHARD AGIMIAN, PRESIDENT

OUR MISSION: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power