

POINTS OF VIEW

# Shriners have golden opportunity

The Multicultural Multiracial (MCMR) Community Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills was formed in 1990 as an outgrowth of community discussions among parents, students, city and school officials concerning conflicts that were occurring between students of different ethnic groups.

Upon reflection, city and school officials determined that a group of concerned and knowledgeable community members needed to meet and discuss diversity issues on a regular basis; hence, the MCMR Council was established.

Today's council consists of residents, business representatives, students and administrators from Farmington Public Schools (including the superintendent, bilingual director, school board member and others), Mercy High School's principal, both city managers and mayors, religious leaders, cultural organizations, the OCC-Orchard Ridge campus president, the YMCA, the director of the Farmington Community Library, and a representative from the Council of Homeowners (COHA). Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer will also join the council, beginning in July.

As outlined in our mission statement, the council works to assure that all residents of our community enjoy a harmonious, healthy environment and that they



KAREN BOLSEN

GUEST COLUMNIST

feel welcome and comfortable in their cities, schools and neighborhoods. The MCMR council is dedicated to promoting awareness and acceptance of diversity in our community.

To this end, council members provide considerable programming to include community forums, speakers, the annual Rainbow Recognition Breakfast, annual cultural luncheons, as well as several conferences in the past two years (one for students and one for 400 regional participants). The council has a community phone help-line, (248) 428-4457. We have representation on the Farmington Public Schools' Diversity and Community Partnership committees, the Farmington Hills Crime Prevention Task Force, and the Interagency Council.

We have a new task force to address education and training issues to provide the community with information about various cultures and races, develop cultural contacts for language translation and gain knowledge about different cultures, and to start educational activities such as a book club.

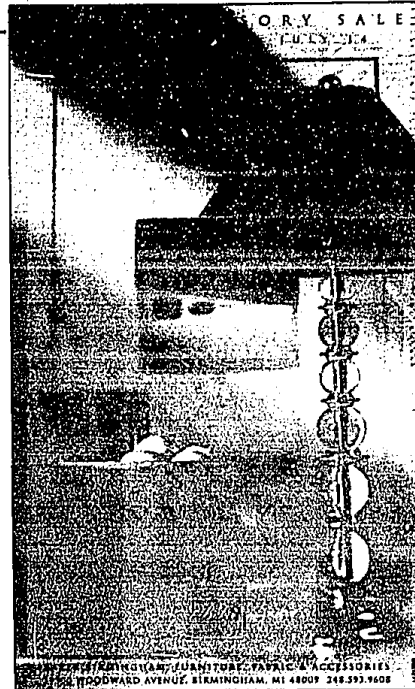
The council is consulted during conflict situations in the community; we also plan proactively for celebrations of all our residents. One example is the upcoming "Many Faces, One Future - Our Community's Heritage Festival" Sept. 16-24.

It was with the MCMR mission in mind that the council discussed several of the acts in the Farmington Area Family (Founder's) Festival Parade. Five years ago, the former chairperson of our council met with local Shriners' representatives to discuss our concern with the Shriners' depiction of American Indians in the Founder's Parade. The war-whooping cowboy and Indian stagecoach gun robbing act has remained. Each year after the parade, residents remark at the contradiction between what we say as a community in our MCMR mission statement and what our children see in the parade.

We teach our children to treat individuals with respect and then lay before them glaring examples of adults making a joke of the genocide that occurred with the native peoples of this country.

All across the country, educators are attempting to teach our children our nation's accurate history, not the Hollywood glamorized version of cowboys and Indians. For example, in the August, 1999

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