

DIVERSITY

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White Institution." "Samantha attended it," Steckloff said. The audience laughed.

"It illustrates something that even she took for granted," they said. "She has a very real appreciation that we are all a product of our time and our place. We should be thankful for living in this time and this place."

Though the metropolitan Detroit area has been described as the most segregated in the United States, the Farmington area isn't like that. "We are an oasis which attracts people to this area," Steckloff said.

Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield canceled the kickoff event. He introduced George Keith, vice-chancellor of Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus who filled in on short notice for scheduled keynote speaker W. Frank Fountain a Daimler-Chrysler vice-president, who canceled due to a death in his family. Keith was active with the MCMR years ago.



Nancy Coumoudouras and keynote speaker Dr. George Keith listen to the Harrison Concert Chior.

"Community is that sense of drawing together of things, the witness," Keith said. "It's where they come together and they share. It's where there is a common folk about them."

Community also suggests an action and building process. "This community believes that it is a unified sense of diverse elements," Keith said.

"This community believes completely in an integration of interest and wills."

Others focused on the Farmington community's similarities and differences.

"Dr. Martin Luther King said, 'Men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they are often separated from each other,'" said Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates.

Thanks to the MCMR and its programs, the community is not separated, Bates said.

The United States has one of the most ethnically mixed societies in the world, said

Farmington Mayor Jim Mitchell. Once considered a melting pot the U. S. can now be considered pluralistically more of a salad bowl where each ethnic group can retain its identity.

"This is a great chance for all of us to celebrate our diversity," Mitchell said.

It's important that what takes place in the community is reflected in the classroom and vice versa, said Farmington School Board Member Priscilla Brouillette.

"The serious conversation and the study is part of what makes Farmington the kind of place which continues to attract and keep the type of people who reflect the very best of what America can be," she said.

In all three Farmington High Schools, the district "connects the dots to build an inclusive environment with a strong web," said Lydia Runkel, assistant principal at Farmington High School.

BERNSTEIN

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doing this," he said. "We were successful in that we made sure people were aware of what was happening."

Bernstein said Wayne State represents the working folks of southeastern Michigan. Many of the students work while they go to the Wayne State to better their education.

"They are working folks who don't have a franchise," he said. "They're people who need representation."

He said even though it's the third largest university in Michigan, Wayne falls in state financing compared to the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

Higher education appropriation funding from the state for the 2002-03 school year for U of M is \$363 million; Michigan State is \$325 million and Wayne State is \$253 million.

"I want to see (Wayne State) get their fair share and 'fair shake,'" Bernstein said.

And the other side of the coin

is making it known that people with disabilities can get the job done, he said.

"It's time for the disabled community to fight, to have a blind person on a statewide ticket to address disability issues," he said. "It gives me an opportunity to focus on issues like special education."

He said law school was not easy task, as reading and reviewing law books is a fact of a law student's life.

Everything had to be read to him, because printing law books in Braille would create text that would require a fork-lift, he said.

Is there a benefit to being blind?

Yes, said Bernstein, in the sense that his spiritual perception is enhanced.

"You get empathy and better listening skills to what people are saying," he said. "The great

thing is you tend not to pre-judge people."

Bernstein also serves on several community service boards and those that address disability issues. Among his honors are the 2000 Volunteer of the Year award from the Jewish Home and Aging Services. He also serves on the Pro Bono Committee, Oakland/Livingston Legal Aid.

If elected to the board of governors, Bernstein said he'd want to make himself accessible to students and even hold open office hours.

In the meantime, he is busy spreading his message among school children and other groups. It keeps him busy from the time he gets up to the time he heads to bed.

And he lets it be known that even though it might not seem fair he was born blind, "that's just the way life is."

"I have to work harder for clients, I have to have everything memorized, but once they see it, they lose their apprehension," he said. "What I do is just work a lot harder to do it."

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Hills FD to host 25th annual Open House

BY PAUL R. PACE STAFF WRITER

The popular Farmington Hills Fire Prevention Open House celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

Fire officials will once again be offering a fun-filled afternoon while families can learn about fire safety from noon-4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 6, at the Farmington Hills Fire Headquarters at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road.

The educational family-focused event is the largest fire prevention open house in

Michigan.

Children can spray a fire hose, climb on fire engines and dress up as firefighters.

Families will have the chance to practice home fire escapes in the new Fire Safety House, a specially designed house that fills with theatrical smoke, demonstrating the difficulty of escaping when not properly prepared.

The afternoon will also feature guests and plenty of photo opportunities with Herbie the Fire Hydrant, Sparky the Fire Dog, and the Fire Department Clown Troupe.

Visitors can watch a fire-rescue team in action when Farmington Hills' award-winning, world competition extraction team demonstrates an automotive crash rescue using the Jaws of Life.

Also, the "Answer Guys," members of the Farmington Hills Fire Department posing as renowned scientists, will be testing quirky fire safety "inventions" to reinforce fire safety messages for elementary school children in Farmington Public Schools now through Oct. 4.

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"Here I am calling the distinguished Dr. Keith 24 hours before the event says 'Do you believe in free speech? Do you want to give one?'" Maxfield said.

"He got me pretty good," acknowledged Keith.

Separateness and difference can be celebrated because they are part of the wholeness, Keith began. People sometimes think of diversity as a black-white issue, he said.

It's far more than that in the Farmington area. Maxfield mentioned there are 85 languages spoken in the homes of Farmington Public School students.

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