



KIRKWOOD

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

The Kirkwood Human Rights Commission (HRC) continued to achieve its charter in 2013. It promoted community awareness, worked to eliminate discrimination, aided those with disabilities and provided an open forum to the citizens of Kirkwood.

Its mission is not complete. It still needs to become a more active servant and leader. To accomplish this last task, the Commission members met on December 8, 2013 to set their Strategic Plan for 2014. Goals, subcommittees and duties were discussed, developed and distributed and steps to achieve the goals determined and set on a calendar.

To promote community awareness, the Commission continued to maintain its Facebook page, advertise its monthly meetings and held its annual presentation on October 19, 2013 at Kirkwood High School. The Commission presented a discussion and break-out sessions on diversity. Present were the Anti-Defamation League, Paraquad, National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Promoting Equality for all Missourians. The discussion leader was the Rev. Starky Wilson, Deaconess Foundation President. The Commission recognized the efforts of four individuals who contributed in a positive way to promoting diversity. The Commission honored the Rev. David Bennett for his work on race relations; Tom Gaither-Ganius on mental health; Carol Gilster on disability; and Andrew Shaughnessy on his involvement in the LGBT community.

In addition to promoting diversity and in line with it, the Commission has continued to monitor the relationship between the City of Kirkwood and the Meacham Park neighborhood. The issues are long standing and deep, they need attention.

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Michael Brown and Mayor McDonnell have met with a member of the U.S. Department of Justice who occasionally surfaces to mediate and address the status of the Mediation Agreement. CAO Brown, as the City's representative, has met with HRC members; Harriet Patton of the Meacham Park Neighborhood Association and members of the Community For Understanding and Hope to keep communication open and honest and practicable.

Chairman Frost continues to reach out to sister commissions such as in St. Charles, MO. to discuss areas of common concern and share ideas on how to promote human rights.

In November and December, CAO Brown, Kirkwood City council members Nancy Luetzow and Paul Ward, met with members of the Meacham Park Neighborhood Improvement Association, the Community for Understanding and Hope and the HRC to discuss ways to help Meacham Park move forward. Everyone agrees that a better Meacham Park is a better Kirkwood.

The meetings were led by Ron Hodges and Jeffrey Blair. The group agreed they needed concrete goals and specific steps to meet those goals. Two initially identified goals are to complete a NIP form so people can express their concerns anonymously without fear of repercussions; and to close the achievement gap by using African American professionals to mentor the younger generation in education and personal conduct.

The groups meet together monthly.

As with every past year, The Commission is holding an essay contest for local High School students. Last year's essay concerned the Dr. Martin Luther King speech "I have a Dream."

Morgan Hartenstein, a junior from Ursuline High School won the essay contest. She was honored at the Commission's open to the public celebration of the King Speech held at the Kirkwood Baptist Church in February, 2013.

This year's essay subject asks the students to write a universally acceptable definition of the phrase "Human Rights".

Chairperson Darnel Frost, Vice Chair Maggie Duwe and Commission member John Hoffmann attended the Equal Housing Authority's 19th Annual Fair Housing Conference on April 5 at the Missouri History Museum.

Commission member Denis Hart attended the Second Annual International Human Rights Day Conference in Jefferson City, MO. on 12/6/13.

Commission Chair Darnel Frost and Vice-Chair Maggie Duwe, continued to meet with city attorney John Hessel to complete their work on an LGBT anti-discrimination ordinance. The subject of this year's tireless efforts have been on creating an enforcement provision for the ordinance. Some of the thorny issues involve privacy concerns, punishment, and due process. This is no easy task and the work continues.

One issue on disability the Commission continued to monitor was the work to create a more convenient access to the post-office on Kirkwood Road. Through the intervention of Michael Brown, the landlord of the Post-Office building requested bids from contractors to create an

access ramp and a functional door for those individuals using a wheelchair or otherwise have difficulty with self motor skills. The Commission is happy to report that the work is complete.

The Commission was at full staff this year with nine members. Though the very able and respected Staci Reliford resigned in 2013, Mayor McDonnell lost no time in recommending with the assent of the Council, Denis Hart to fill the open position. Denis chaired the Commission's Strategic Planning Meeting on December 8, 2013.

The Commission members met at the Kirkwood Community Center on December 8 and created their 2014 Strategic Plan. A copy will be attached as an addendum to this report.

During the April 2013 meeting elections were held for chair person, vice chair and secretary.

With unanimous votes on all selections, Darnel Frost was re-elected chair, Maggie Duwe as vice chair and for the first time, Romona Miller was chosen as secretary.

Good luck to our executive members.

The Commission members are energized and excited to develop and meet the goals of their strategic plan for 2014 and make it a year Kirkwood can be proud.