

Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes, September 25, 2003

Attendees: Pat MacLean, Gabe Garcia, Nancy Clark, Susan Wagner, John Hagen, Jeanne Poppe, Liliana Silvestry-Neilon, Tricia Wiechmann. Reporter, Matt Merritt.

There were no May minutes because there was no May meeting.

Old Business – Report on 3rd Annual Diversity event.

Liliana reported the Ethnic Festival was successful. More people are coming each year. She tried to get more local entertainment this year. Agencies continue to be involved and collaborating. Liliana would like to see more for children and she wants a committee to help develop next year's event. Perhaps the Parenting Resource Center could take care of doing the children's activities. Also there could be more Vietnamese and Sudanese families and activities involved. It was concluded that the Human Rights Commission act as a co-sponsor and assist Liliana in the planning stages. She would like to have a meeting for planning next year's activities in November.

Liliana also mentioned the Welcome Center will not be doing the July 4th parade float.

New Business – Essay contest.

Tricia had information regarding the essay contest. The deadline is March 31 for us to send winners to MN Human Rights Department. The grade level is 6th, 7th, 8th graders. We agreed that we would make some personal contact before the next HRC meeting (October 23) to the area school teachers. Susan will contact Queens, Jeanne will do 8th grade of Ellis and Nancy will contact the English and History staff for 6th and 7th grade of Ellis. Gabe will contact the area banks for savings bond prizes.

Our timeline will be November 3 – December 15 for getting the teachers to collect the writings from the students. We will then get judges to read the essays over the holidays and award the winners on Monday January 19 at the MLK event. We will need at least three judges (readers). Jeanne will check with League of Women Voters to see if she can get judges.

Martin Luther King, Jr Day is January 19. The Welcome Center and Human Rights Commission will co-sponsor that event. Liliana has been asked by St Olaf Church if we will again be using their facility. It was agreed that again this year the event will start at City Hall, march to St Olaf Church, and include a program awarding the Human Rights Commission Award and naming the three winners of the essay contest. Liliana said with tight budgets the Welcome Center can no longer solely fund the event. The cost is at least \$500 for food and perhaps another \$500 for flyers and advertising. A suggestion was made to have a freewill donation some Sunday in churches that could be used for this event or to ask area churches to each donate \$100 or more to the event. Liliana will go to the ministerial association for their assistance.

Trish will bring nomination forms to the next meeting and Liliana will bring the flyers from last year and we can modify for this year's event. We will ask Virginia Larsen (last year's recipient) to give the award this year. Past winners include Pat Piper, Sue Grove, Kathy Skjeveland.

Building Community: An Equity and Diversity Initiative is a community advisory team that has been formed through Riverland Community College who received an Otto Bremer grant. On meeting has been held. There is a workshop on Friday, September 26 which members of the initiative have been invited to attend. Liliana, Gabe and Nancy have all been invited to attend the initiative group. Jeanne will be attending the workshop as it is a staff development activity at Riverland Community College.

Trish reported the Owatonna Human Rights Commission is hosting an informational meeting on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention. She is wondering if others from the HRC will want to attend. Trish is also contacting the police and sheriff's depts.

Liliana showed a copy of the Coalition Free Press newsletter she got from Hooch. It pertains to the Immigration by the Numbers video we watched last year. There is information in the newsletter concerning the Welcome Center and the Mower County Human Services.

The MN Dept of Human Rights will be having the statewide conference on Friday December 5; Julian Bond is the keynote speaker.

Gabe and Liliana joined 22 other Austin residents at the Blandin Institute training.