

MINUTES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
CITY OF AUSTIN MINNESOTA
Thursday, October 24, 2002

PRESENT: Gabe Garcia, Nancy Clark, Liliana Silvestry-Neilon, Tricia Wiechmann and Pat MacLean. Community member, Walter Schwarts, also attended.

ABSENT: Masuka Magambo, Anu Kasturi, Brandon Lawhead, John Hagen and Karl Dalager.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gabe Garcia at 6:15 p.m. Minutes of the September 26th meeting were approved as written.

Community Concern: Walter Schwarts addressed the Commission to share his concern about gang activity in Austin, especially among the Hispanic community. He said there are some people here from the West coast that are recruiting gang members among Hispanic teens. Walter advocated the need to educate parents to be aware of the signs of gang activity in their children and expressed concern about how this gang activity reflects negatively on the Hispanic community as a whole.

The Commission discussed what our role is in this situation and what other agencies/groups are already doing about it. It was suggested we sponsor a coalition or forum to promote a joint effort involving groups such as Neighborhood Watch, law enforcement, the City Community Relations Committee and the Parenting Resource Center. Trish agreed to identify key members of each of these groups and see if there is already some kind of drug prevention task force already in existence. She will email/mail information to the rest of the Commission after she makes some contacts.

Essay Contest: Nancy reported she has received approval from the principals at Queens and Ellis for participation by their students in the essay contest sponsored by the League of Minnesota Human Rights Commission. Our local Commission will sponsor a contest here in Austin and recruit judges to select the winners. It was agreed to have three local winners at each of the three grade levels, sixth through eighth. The top one in each grade will be sent to compete at the state level. The deadline for entries in the local contest is February 14th and winners will be announced on March 21st. The deadline for state entries is March 31st.

Nancy will develop a letter and flyer information to distribute to the teachers before December 10th, Human Rights Day. Trish will check to see if the Commission can solicit prizes from the community. Gabe and Liliana volunteered to contact local banks to ask if they will donate savings certificates for prizes if that is approved.

Promotion Tape: Pat brought the human rights promotion tape produced by Riverland Community College students that has been played on KAUS. .

November Meeting: Since our regular meeting time in November would be on Thanksgiving, it was decided to meet on **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, at 6 p.m.** It is important that all members be present. Please call Trish if you are unable to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat MacLean