



The 2012 Annual Report

of the City of Columbus – Human Rights Commission

City of Columbus





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Executive Summary

Chairperson's Report

I continued to believe that Columbus has much to be proud of. It continues to evolve and reinvent itself in a manner that tries to be inclusive of all its residents. I am proud to say that the Columbus Human Rights Commission has tried to be a part of that evolution not only through its enforcement activities, but its proactive work as well. 2012 represented the Commission's 50th anniversary of existence. In those 50 years, the Commission has also attempted to be a part of proactive solutions that makes Columbus a community that welcomes all to its city. Over those 50 years, the Commission has been committed to positive and productive responses to the demographic changes in its population and work energetically to insure that all people, including the newest members of the community as well as the oldest members of the community enjoy the same rights. I again extend congratulations to the staff and fellow Commissioners who put their commitment to human rights in their work to make Columbus a community that all people wish to join and a place those who are here don't wish to leave. In 2012, the Commission continued its enforcement work, but also embarked upon some creative projects to make that pursuit a reality. The Commission created the "Adventures in DiverCity" to provide a path to personal awareness about various aspects of diversity. Through the project the Commission played a role in ramping up this community's ability to engage and provide opportunities for learning in the area of diversity.



Working with Mayor Brown, the Commission continued as convener and provided its support of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Disability and Accessibility under the facilitation of Director Lorraine Smith. With this newfound focus, the Commission is committed to making sure that this group provides an additional voice for Columbus' disabled community. The Human Rights Commission stepped up to assist with the update of the City's ADA Transition plan as the City staffed its Human Resources Department. Deputy Director Francis Jordan spearheaded the process to ensure that the City maintained its obligation under federal law – an obligation that had implications as to the receipt of federal funds for the City.

These are just a few examples of the work that the Commission has been involved in over the past year, but as we look to the future, the goal of the CHRC has been and continues to be full inclusion of all members of city in economic and civil life. Protection of each person's human rights is essential to providing a high quality of life in Columbus and quality of life is essential to economic growth.

-Gilbert A. Palmer



Mission

To lead Columbus in building and maintaining an inclusive community by:

- Enforcing the Human Rights Ordinance
- Educating the public
- Challenging attitudes and systems that create barriers to equality
- Empowering community members to advance this mission

Ordinance

“It is the public policy of the City to provide all persons an equal opportunity for and in education, employment, public accommodations and acquisition through purchase or rental of real property including but not limited to housing. Equal educational and employment opportunities and equal access to and use of public accommodations and equal opportunities for acquisition of real property and access to credit as defined in Indiana Code, 24-4.5-1-301, are declared to be civil rights.

The practice of denying those civil rights to a person by reason of race, religion, color, sex, pregnancy, disability, national origin or ancestry of such individual is contrary to the principals of equal opportunity stated in this chapter and shall be considered discriminatory practices.

The promotion of equal opportunity without regard to race, religion, color, sex, pregnancy, disability, national origin or ancestry through enforcement, public education and other reasonable methods is the purpose of this chapter. It is also its purpose to protect employers, labor organizations, employment agencies, property owners, real estate brokers, lending institutions and insurance companies from unfounded charges of discrimination through the professional investigation and resolution of complaints. This chapter shall be construed broadly to effectuate its purpose.” – Columbus Human Rights Commission Ordinance 9.24.020

Rules and Regulations

Through its Rules and Regulations Sections II, III & IV, the Human Rights Commission prohibits discrimination on the basis of:

- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity



In the areas of employment, housing, education, public accommodation or credit. Age, Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity complaints are processed through the Commission's Voluntary Mediation Program. (See section II (W) under the Commission's Rules and Regulations.)

ADA Transition Plan

The Human Rights Department offered to assist the City in the update of the City's Transition Plan. The City Engineer's office evaluated the Public rights of way, and Frances Jordan, Deputy Director assessed compliance of all facilities, programs, and services provided by the City of Columbus. Two public hearings were facilitated and a draft report was conducted. The report will become official when presented to the Board of Works after the final review is complete, which is still ongoing. The project was a significant undertaking, taking place over a span of seven months.

Commissions

Human Rights

The Commission is comprised of Columbus citizens appointed by City Council and sworn into office by Mayor Columbus. The Human Rights Commissioners are volunteers whose skills and knowledge encompass business management, government, law, education, entrepreneurship, engineering, law, clergy, and religion. The Commission has been able to effectively carry out its work because of the caliber of talent of the Commissioners. In 2012, three Commissioners were reappointed by City Council. They included: Minister and BCSC Diversity Director Tony McClendon; Attorney John Stoh, Dr. Andrae Marak and East High School History Department Chair and teacher, Greg Lewis. They represent the wide array of skills that all of the Commissioners bring to the commission Board and most importantly their commitment and dedication. Indicative of that dedication, Gil Palmer, Chair of the Commission, received one of the highest community honors with his selection as recipient of the 2012 IUPUC Excellence in Diversity Award for his many years of work on issues of diversity and human rights in Columbus.

Local Enforcement

The Commission continued its primary charge of providing local solutions to local problems in providing complaint processing services for community residents and technical assistance to community members, businesses and landlords of Columbus. The Commission saw a large uptick in disability cases, most of them involving accommodation. We surmise the large swing is due to the change in the ADA and referrals to this office because of the amendments which broadened the definition of disability. In 2012,



the Commission provided nearly 150 calls/walk-ins seeking request for assistance. A total of 15 cases were filed through our office: 93.33% of the cases were employment and just over 6% housing. Four cases were filed with CHRC; four were dual-filed with the Commission.

The office saw a significant increase in requests for assistance related to the issue of disability and particularly accommodation. This impacted the number of cases which remained with this office. Cases that involved accommodation were either dual-filed when appropriate or filed with sole with EEOC. Rather than split out a case whose bases were both straight disability and accommodation, which our ordinance does not cover, it was deemed more appropriate to have the case remain with one agency to provide for less complicated case processing for the Complainant. Close to 50% of the cases involved disability and some form of failure to accommodate which impacted the decision to either dual-file or file solely with EEOC. One race case which was sole filed with CHRC was mediated. The balance of cases filed either solely with CHRC, dual-filed with EEOC were sex, age, or retaliation. Sex comprised a little over 25% of the cases taken.

Close to \$12,000 in actual damages through the mediation process were paid to Complainants, as a result of the Commission's assistance either through cases filed at our office, dual-filed cases or through interagency assistance. The Commission continues to emphasize equitable remedies to discrimination, including training, reinstatement as a tenant or employee when appropriate, education, and restructured business processes in order to prevent future discrimination.

The Commission provided successful technical assistance on ADA issues that were resolved successfully which resulted in training provided by this office and a letter of intent to improve program access.

Councils

Mayor's Advisory Council on Disability and Accessibility

At the behest of the Mayor, the Human Rights Commission served as the convener of this council created by Mayor Brown. Over 17 applications were received for the nine member advisory board. This office: conducted the research and initial draft of the bylaws, solicited candidates, conducted the interviews and drafted the matrix of candidates for review and selection by Mayor Brown. The group's first meeting was held in October with ex-officio members from the Planning, Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments. Mayor Brown as well as a community guest was in attendance.



Welcoming Community Stakeholders

Born out of the Mayor's Strategic Plan Committee, of which CHRC Director Lorraine Smith was a member appointed by Mayor Brown, Tracy Souza and Director of the Commission Lorraine Smith created a framework for a Welcoming Community Stakeholders in 2012. Building on the work of Heritage Fund's Welcoming Community studies and its spin off organizations, the Mayor will appoint a Welcoming Community Stakeholder Commission to ensure the sustainability of this community value and strategic priority. The Welcoming Community Stakeholders Council will meet at least twice a year and review progress against the welcoming community metrics. The WCSC will listen to the public and attempt to identify gaps and barriers in reaching our community vision and propose initiatives to close those gaps. The Council is scheduled to convene first quarter 2013.

African American Monthly Meeting with Mayor

With the enthusiastic agreement of Mayor Brown, Director Smith facilitated bringing together the leadership within the African American community to discuss issues and share ideas with newly elected Mayor Brown over lunch each month. The intent is for each to share ideas and build relationships. Chairperson Palmer, Director Smith and/or Deputy Director Jordan attend and support these meetings.

Grants

Oral History Project II

The Commission partnered with IUPUC, Pride Alliance and Inclusive Community of Columbus and received one of 13 Welcoming Community grants funded by Heritage Fund. As Pride Alliance and ICC will document stories of the LGBT experience in Columbus, the Commission's project will continue documenting the stories of African Americans in Columbus as a continuation of the first project from 2000. The grant allowed the three organizations to purchase and share video equipment to record their oral histories. Five Commissioners as well as Director will interview a variety of African Americans who can share their experiences in Columbus through lenses such as family, business, entrepreneurship, educational and other perspectives. The teams underwent an intensive training required by IUPUC's Institutional Review Board to ensure that interviewers were taking appropriate care in the interview process.



Adventures in Diversity

The Commission partnered with Mill Race Center and received one of 13 Welcoming Community grants funded by Heritage Fund. Adventures in Diversity is an organized and hopefully fun way to involve Bartholomew County residents in events, programs and activities that focus on diversity in and around Bartholomew County - the goal to increase cross cultural learning and awareness and thereby create a more inclusive community.

With its kickoff in May 2012, the program acquired 70+ participants who signed up to be a part of the Adventures in Diversity. We have about 25 different people actively participating in the “Adventure.” The second half of the program, which continues into 2013, hopes to double in new participation as compared to the first half.

Adventures in Diversity Fast Facts (As of November 2012):

- Number of Evaluations: 35
- Number of Registrants: 77
- Number of Events to Dates: 30
- Roulette Award: Jason Maddix (First Prize Awarded)

Interfaith Forum Gudwara Vigil

This Commission office helped facilitate the bringing the vigil to the steps of City Hall in August. Commissioners as well as Commission staff participated. The purpose of the vigil was to take a stand against religious terrorism relative to the Wisconsin Sikh Gudwara tragedy, which is considered a hate crime. The vigil brought together Christians, Sikhs, and others from different faiths to stand together shoulder to shoulder against this act of terror.

“God in Box” Film Screening

Through the work of our Commission Liaison Rhea Baker-Ipek, the Commission continued its support of various community endeavors to educate Columbus on many diversity issues, including an event sponsored by Interfaith Forum, IFF. IFF asked the Commission to put its support behind the film screening of the documentary along with audience dialogue with the creator, filmmaker and Director Nathan Lang at the Columbus Learning Center on March 29, 2012. The film raised a number of thought-provoking issues



around race, religion, and gender. As part of our mission to educate the public and to break down barriers to inclusion, the Commission was proud to be a part of this program.

2012 Accomplishments

Human Rights Commission

Annual Dinner

The Commission held the most successful Annual Dinners with regard to the best evaluations since the evaluations were utilized to measure results of the dinner. With 250 guests in attendances and 60 evaluations returned, 99.9% of the evaluations were rated either strongly agree or agree as to factors such as “content of presentations and increased knowledge and understanding of local diversity and human rights issues; interest in the Human



Rights commission and volunteering for the Commission.” Comments included the following: “Outstanding Program, an inspiration to live by”; “Excellent Speaker”; “Use this year as an example. This was the best yet. Mr. Visconti was fantastic” and finally “Keep up the excellent work.”

Diversity Roundtable

The day following the Annual Dinner, the Commission implemented the community’s first Diversity Roundtable where we were able to reach maximum capacity of 50 invited representatives from areas such as business, education, advocacy, government and faith-based organizations. This event was a highlight of the Annual Dinner process and the Commission’s community education activities as the program provided community leaders an opportunity to dialogue with Mr. Visconti in regard to diversity issues in their perspective field or areas of concern.





Student Essay/Poster Art Contest

The Essay and Art Contest, which is traditionally, part of the Commission's Annual Dinner framework, received close to 400 contest entries. The Commission deems the contest as a means to educate and engage students on issues of diversity and human rights.

William R. Laws Human Rights Award

The Commission selected Bob Pittman, Director of Mill Race Center, because of his significant body of work regarding issues surrounding senior citizens. The Commission recognized Mr. Pittman's achievements in the field of senior and aging populations regarding his promotion of diverse and inclusive activities and educational programming at Mill Race, including race, disability, multiculturalism and sexual orientation through its key collaborative role on the Partners in Education (PIE) programming throughout the community and many other key education organizations. His work for seniors reaches all the way back to when he worked at Wichita State University. During his tenure at Mill Race, he was the National Chairman of the National Institute of Senior Centers in 2009.

Community Education and Awareness Training

Not-for-profit Training

The Director provided training and/or community presentations for the following:

- 10 United Way not-for-profit Agency Directors or Representatives
- Staff of Just Friends Adult Daycare Services
- CAMEO

Fire Department Anti-harassment Training

At the request of the Fire Department, Director Smith provided two weeks of training on anti-harassment. From December 10-19, Director Smith conducted nine sessions, which included 70 employees.

Indiana Governor's Council on Disabilities Conference

On behalf of Mayor Brown, Director Smith participated on a panel in a discussion regarding Livable Communities as part of the Indiana governors Statewide Conference for People with Disabilities. The



theme was Community Connections. Director Smith spoke about welcoming community initiatives and mayor's advisory council on disabilities. The panel included Lewis Ricci Director of the Indiana Arts commission, Gwen Langley Director of Government and Global Community Relations, mayors of Linton and Huntington and a representative from the Valparaiso Planning Department. Columbus is on the right trajectory. The discussion was an attempt to broaden the conversation about people with disabilities in the context of community-wide initiatives and how to involve people with disabilities in those initiatives.

Leadership Bartholomew County Diversity Day

Deputy Director Jordan provided human rights presentations for several community organizations such as Leadership Bartholomew County where she continued these departments work in assisting with planning the Diversity Day session for the class. Other presentations provided by Frances included, IUPUC, CAMEO, and Four Seasons Retirement Home.

Continuing Legal Education Seminar

In collaboration with the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, the Commission hosted a Statewide Continuing Legal Education Seminar on Friday April 18 in the Meeting Hall. The program is an Equal Employment Law Update. The program had 51 attendees comprised of mostly attorneys.

Networking with the Community

Staff and/or Commissioners continued to serve as a resource/liaison to the commission in a number of roles including organizations such as:

- Pride Alliance
- Inclusive Community Coalition
- CAMEO
- BCSC Anti-bullying Task Force
- Teen Pregnancy Council
- CYP
- BCSC Diversity Cabinet
- IUPUC Diversity Cabinet



- IUPUC Department of Education Advisory Board

In addition, Director Smith served as mentor to an East High School student's senior project on anti-bullying over the course of the 2011-2012 academic calendar year.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Commissioner John Roberts provided a presentation on Dr. Martin Luther King to St. Peter's Elementary School students. Commissioner Roberts also provided presentations to Southside Elementary School students as well. He continues to receive yearly invites to return to educate students about the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Muslims Don't All Look Alike”

On November 15, 2012, Commissioner Roberts moderated the Welcoming Community II grant program “Muslims Don't All Look Alike.” The program was almost filled to capacity.

Sustained Community Dialogue

Commissioner Baker-Ipek and Deputy Director Jordan served as facilitators on this pilot program aimed at creating a process on community dialogue in Columbus on various issues including possible topics such as diversity and inclusion.

NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet

The Commission was represented by Director Lorraine Smith at the NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet held by the local chapter of the NAACP.

Black History Month Celebration

On February 8, the Commission staff provided the presentation for the CAMEO general membership meeting on February 8. The African American Association was the host culture – Deputy Director Jordan provided a short presentation on the Tuskegee Airmen; staff provided food representative of African American culture along with a historical context. Attended by Mayor Brown and Director Smith, the meeting



was very well attended. On February 19, Director Smith and Commissioner Roberts attended the Black History Month event at Calvary Community Church where Mayor Brown presented and read a proclamation.

Outreach Committee

Director Lorraine Smith continued her role on Heritage Fund Board and as Chair of the Outreach Committee. The Outreach Committee developed the Welcoming Community II Grants program, which awarded 13 grants to community organizations to develop programs and activities which will educate and raise awareness on welcoming community issues.

2013 Goals and Objectives

- Goal I – Enforcing the Ordinance – Effective case processing as a key staff priority
- Goal II – Educating the Public – Implementation of current strategies and implementation of creative and innovative strategies that promote a Welcoming Community, education on anti-discrimination law, education on the work of the Commission and human rights history and diversity
- Goal III – Networking with the Community – Maintain key stakeholder relationships with various welcoming community and diversity-related groups by becoming an organization knowledgeable on potential discrimination issues in the community
- Goal IV – Challenging attitudes and systems that create barriers to equality – Become a leader and or partner in the development of innovative strategies and initiatives that break down systemic discrimination by providing solutions on discrimination issues proactively through the development of community networks; by creating awareness on Welcoming Community issues and by assisting Welcoming Community and diversity-oriented groups in their work including:
 - Convening and facilitating Mayor’s Council on Disability and Accessibility
 - As applicable, serve as co-convener of proposed Welcoming Community Stakeholder Council



- Increasing Community Disability Issues Awareness
- Providing assistance on the City of Columbus ADA Transition Plan as requested and appropriate
- Support Heritage Fund Welcoming Community Catalyst Work
- Support Mayor's City-wide strategic plan regarding Welcoming Community