

Our Vision: A state where all people are free of discrimination.

Iowa Civil Rights Commission Communicator

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What's New At The Iowa Civil Rights Commission?

The Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) is about to embark on a new adventure. ICRC is in the process of instituting a *New Internal Mediation Program* as part of our early resolution efforts.

Mediation is a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) that takes place after a complaint has been considered screened in, or accepted for investigation, at ICRC. It is a fair, neutral, and confidential process. ICRC currently has a Volunteer Mediation Program that has been successful since implementation in 1993. A total of 993 cases have been assigned to volunteer attorneys for mediation. In 225 cases successful settlements have been reached, 31 right-to-sues have been issued and three Complainants withdrew.

ADR has also been successful with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) since its implementation in 1999. According to an EEOC survey, "Over 90% of employers and employees who used Mediation would definitely do so again!"

EEOC has resolved a cumulative total of 11,600 private sector charges and obtained monetary benefits of over \$150 million for complainants through the mediation process. An evaluation of the EEOC Mediation Program showed 91% in favor of mediation as an alternative on the complainant's side and 96% in favor on the respondent side.

The *New Internal Mediation Program* involves internal specialists bringing the parties together in an informal setting to resolve their dispute. The specialist is neutral, confidential and will not decide the dispute. This process is *not* part of ICRC's investigation and it is strictly voluntary.

Cont. on page 3.....

I'll Make Me A World in Iowa Expands Programming

I'll Make Me A World in Iowa is a diverse collaboration of Iowans and over 20 organizations, which highlights African-American arts, culture, and contributions through education, awareness, and preservation during an annual enrichment celebration and ongoing educational outreach. After an enormously successful year, this past year, the *I'll Make Me a World in Iowa* planning committee and advisory board are expanding their activities. This year the co-chairs are Betty Andrews (515-288-4900) and Anita Williams (515-294-4475). Once again the coordinator will be John Busbee (515-237-1690).

This year the advisory board is once again headed by Dr. Mary Sconiers-Chapman, Executive Dean at DMACC Urban Campus, and First Lady, Christie Vilsack. The advisory board, a collaboration of Iowans dedicated to celebrating African-American arts, culture, and preservation, is working diligently to support the *I'll Make Me a World in Iowa* efforts.

The **Celebration Day** for this year has been set for Saturday, January 27, 2001 at the New Historical Building, 600 East Locust Street in Des Moines. The day's events will begin at 10 AM. Musicians, dancers, singers, and dramatic performers from across the state will once again grace the venues and share their talents with the audience. Last year over 2,000 people attended

Cont. on page 2

Inside this issue ...

My Life in Civil Rights	2
Getting to Know You	3
These Are Our Heroes	4
Attorney from Ghana Visits ICRC	5
Multifamily Housing Accessibility	6
ICRC Volunteer Honored	6
Important Notice on Mailing	7

My Life in Civil Rights

By Carol Anne Leach, Editor

This will be my last issue as editor of the Communicator, as I am retiring soon from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. I've been involved with this publication for at least ten years or more, so it almost seems like a child that I've nurtured along through ups and downs. We've gone from hand-typed articles that had to be typeset to desktop publishing and computerized mailing lists in these few years.

As editor, I have kept my own personal opinions and personal information to a minimum, but now I've exerting my editorial privilege to comment on my time with the agency. Over the years, many people have asked me how I happened to become a civil rights worker, and the best answer is that it was pure serendipity.

I first encountered the agency in 1974 when I moved to Des Moines and urgently needed a job. I took the tests for a clerk typist job with the state, got a good score, and received my first job offer—from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. It was a happy match, and I soon found my niche in civil rights. I later left the agency to complete my college degree, but in 1978 came back to a professional position.

Through the years many changes have taken place in the agency: changes in locations, changes in leadership; changes in philosophies of legal issues and case processing; changes in technology. In some ways nothing seems the same, except the basic work that we do: enforcing the law through complaint processing, advocating for civil rights, and educating the citizens of Iowa about their rights and responsibilities under the law. Our methods and circumstances may change even more in the future, but we will keep doing what we do best—fighting discrimination.

My years in civil rights have taught me that discrimination can and does occur in every walk of life. I'm impatient with those who comment that "there's no discrimination in Iowa" because we're such nice folks. Sorry, but that just isn't so. There are still employers who do not accept women in certain jobs, who do not accept persons with disabilities, or persons who are a different color or whose English skills may be poor. There are housing providers who pale at the thought of renting to Black persons, immigrants and persons with disabilities, and those who believe that renting to families with children

causes instant disintegration to their property. There are neighbors who do not want anyone "different" in their neighborhood.

There are still people who preach hate against persons of another ethnicity or national origin, or persons who are gay and lesbian. Our mission of eliminating discrimination in Iowa seems endless. But we can certainly work on making Iowa a more welcoming and inclusive place, one person at a time and one community at a time. In fact, Iowa must do this in order to grow and compete economically in the global market.

A great big "Thank You" to the people of Iowa and my co-workers for a fulfilling, interesting and "never a dull moment" career. Serendipity provided me with a wonderful career opportunity. As I approach retirement with excitement and a little anxiety, I hope fortune will find a way for me to continue the fight against discrimination. I plan never to lose my passion for justice and equality, although my voice may be heard in other ways. ■

I'll Make Me a World (cont. from page 1...)

Celebration Day. We anticipate this number to be even larger this year. If you would like to help with this year's **Celebration Day**, please contact one of the co-chairs.

Still being requested for exhibit, the *I'll Make Me a World* Freedom Ship visited 16 Iowa cities during its 5-month tour from February to June 2000. This inaugural collaborative art project garnered much attention, stimulating a great deal of local awareness and interest in Iowa's African-American culture and history. This year the educational outreach component to *I'll Make Me a World in Iowa* will expand to reach 30 Iowa communities with the *I'll Make Me a World in Iowa: Get on Board! Celebration Train*. The train theme evokes past images of Iowa's rail system that traversed Iowa, linking its communities; of Iowa's significant role in the Underground Railroad; and of the state's promising future through the appeal for everyone to "get on board."

Each participating community will recruit a local team of diverse youth, an artist, an educator, and other community leaders. The team will receive a plain rail car to decorate with images of local African-American culture, freedom, local diversity, and future visions. Their finished work of art will be joined with the rail cars from the other participating communities and be unveiled at a special reception prior to **Celebration Day**. Then the *Celebration Train* exhibit will tour each participating community.

Getting to Know You

This is the third in our series of interviews with our newest commissioners. Our commissioner this issue is

Rachel Scherle, currently of Iowa City.



Q. Rachel, please tell us about your educational and professional background.

A. I received a BA in political science and journalism this year from Iowa State University; I am currently a first year student at University of Iowa Law School. For my professional background, I worked on the Elizabeth Dole Campaign and at the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics in Ames from 1997-2000.

Q. What experiences have you had in your life that helped you to develop an interest in civil rights?

A. I feel that I have always had a strong sense of justice and this was intensified while I was at Iowa State University. Living in a college town (which was enormously more diverse than where I grew up) gave me a broader perspective and really inspired me to explore some of the equality issues in our society today.

Q. You are probably the youngest person appointed to the Commission. What unique perspectives do you believe you bring to the Commission?

A. As the youngest member of the commission, I feel that I represent an age demographic that is severely under-represented in our society. But, I really don't think that my age is that big of an issue. I feel that the important characteristics for a commissioner are a sense of fairness and justice and an interest in making Iowa a better and more desirable place to live.

Q. What is your vision for the Commission? What do you think are the important issues that need to be dealt with in the next few years?

A. In visioning the commission's future, I would like us to get involved with other state agencies and work together to educate, promote and celebrate Iowa's diversity. Also, many of Iowa's young people are leaving the state because of a lack of diversity and employers just don't

have enough people to fill jobs. Increasing Iowa's diversity is the hot topic now and for the future.

Q. What are some ways that the Commission could be more proactive in reaching out to the citizens of Iowa?

A. I think that the Commission could be more proactive by reaching out to Iowa's young adults and children. They are the future of the state and it would be beneficial to get their input on what they think the commission should be doing. I would like to accomplish this through forums and debates at schools or something even bigger, such as an Iowa youth diversity conference.

Q. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A. Working with my fellow commissioners and the staff has been a great experience and I really enjoy listening to all of the different views we bring to the table. I feel this is a great learning experience for me and I hope that more people my age will see that it is possible to get involved in their state government. ■

To those who believe the battle against discrimination has been won, I say, look at the realities of paychecks and power.

Linda Chavez-Thompson, 1997

What's New (cont. from page 1)

There are several *advantages to mediation* and we want to share them with you:

- it's *free*
- it's *fast* – shorter than full investigation
- it helps the parties put it behind them quickly
- gives both parties the chance to be heard and give their side of the story
- allows the parties to hear each other's concerns and work toward a resolution
- *successful mediation results in settlement and closure of the file*

If no settlement is reached through mediation, ICRC will investigate the charge. If you filed a complaint of discrimination with ICRC, or if a complaint has been filed against you, your company or organization, and you wish to consider mediation, please call Pam Patton, Compliance Manager at (515) 242-6135 or e-mail at pam.patton@icrc.state.ia.us.

These Are Our Heroes: Friends of Civil Rights Award Winners

Award winners were recognized at the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc., annual banquet held on October 12, 2000. Nominations for the awards were solicited from the public, and the Friends Board made the selection of the winners.

Honorary: The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack

This year the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. are proud to present an honorary award to the Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack, Governor of Iowa, for his authorship and support for Executive Order #7. This order reaffirms the State of Iowa's policy of equal opportunity in state employment for all employees and proclaims that an individual shall not be denied access to state employment opportunities because of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or physical or mental disability. Friends applauds the Governor for his courage and determination regarding Executive Order #7, in spite of opposition and litigation.

Education: Ruth Ann Gaines

Ruth Ann Gaines is synonymous with education and the promotion of civil rights. Her students can attest to her passion for both. Ruth Ann is a teacher of drama at East High School in Des Moines. She was selected as the Iowa State Teacher of the Year for the 1998-99 school year. As a result of that award she prepared a wonderful report entitled, "Celebrating Diversity." Ruth Ann also formed and continues to direct Voices of Change, a youth creative dramatics ensemble that presents on current issues throughout central Iowa. She is a role model not only for her students, but also for the whole community. Ruth Ann is also an accomplished storyteller and actress. Her energy is infectious and is only matched by the skill and dedication she brings to her teaching, directing, storytelling, and acting.

Individuals: Howard and Florence Eldrenkamp

Howard and Florence Eldrenkamp have spent their lives in service to others. Since their retirement from their professions in 1987 they have worked tirelessly to help those in need. Together they have served in assisting AIDS patients, and are active members of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), a support and education group for those who have a loved one or friend who is gay or lesbian. They both volunteer at the

Breakfast Club, which serves breakfast and provides assistance to children at Trinity United Methodist Church in Des Moines. Florence has taught ESL for 12 years through Hawthorn Hill Ministries. Howard is an organizer of the annual Hunger Hike, which raises money for the needy. Howard and Florence believe that everyone needs a chance for equal opportunity and that every person is an individual of worth and dignity and they are working to make that chance for equality happen.

Individual: Richard Hayes

For many Sioux Citians, Richard (Dick) Hayes is "Mr. Human Rights." He is repeatedly sought as a spokesperson, speaker, panel member, discussion facilitator, committee member, board director, organization president, and general volunteer for a myriad of programs within and for Sioux City. It is not uncommon for Dick not only to devote countless hours of volunteer time beyond his job description but also to give his personal monetary contributions to assure a community event, civic organization, or deserving individual is enabled financially to succeed. Dick is a man of personal dignity, professional bearing, and unique stature. He exemplifies by thought and action the very best of the qualities of dedication and commitment to improving the condition of human and civil rights.

Individual: Ruby Sutton

Ruby Sutton was born in the South and moved to Dubuque 35 years ago. She has been a leader of the African-American community in Dubuque for several decades, and has worked tirelessly to defend justice, civil rights, and to assist the poor. In 1984, Ruby was named the "First Citizen of Dubuque" by the Telegraph Herald newspaper. Some of her numerous other awards include the Dubuque YWCA Equal Rights Award in 1992; the Dubuque Branch NAACP Peacemaker Award in 1999, and her honorary Doctorate of Laws this year. Ruby freely gives of her time to speak to students concerning civil rights and diversity. She is the person many turn to for assistance when less fortunate residents need food, clothing, or housing. She is the "Mother Theresa" of Dubuque, and a person many others aspire to be.

Organization: The National Conference for Community & Justice (NCCJ)

The National Conference for Community and Justice, NCCJ, has a long history of championing civil rights in Iowa and in the United States. Founded in 1927,

(Cont. on p. 5)

These Are Our Heroes *(cont. from page 4)*

NCCJ is a national human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism in America through advocacy, conflict resolution, and education. Local offices are located throughout the U.S. Rudy Simms, Executive Director, and a board of directors, currently chaired by Greg Naylor head the Iowa office. The local office conducts numerous programs to promote understanding and compassion, such as the Metrotown Youth Retreat, Camp Unitown for middle school students, Camp Anytown for high school students, and the “Understanding the Human Family” Reading/Essay Program for students in grades 4-9.

Since 1997, Honest Conversation Study Circles on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture has provided the Greater Des Moines area with a means to hold honest, thoughtful, focused discussions that challenge assumptions and stereotypes. Recently, NCCJ held their first annual Walk as One Walk-a-thon, in which people from all facets of the Des Moines community came together as teams of diverse walkers showing support for inclusion, and promoting NCCJ’s work with youth. We are all made better by the work of NCCJ and its promotion of understanding, improved interpersonal relations, and action.

Business: United Parcel Service (UPS) Community Relations- Iowa District

A friend is an ally or comrade. The Iowa District Community Relations Division of United Parcel Service has been such to I’ll Make Me a World in Iowa, a celebration of the contributions of African-Americans in the areas of arts and entertainment. This program consists of a celebration day, a black-tie Gala, and this year, a traveling educational outreach project. The educational outreach component was a Freedom Ship, designed by Sudanese ESL students at Central Campus in Des Moines. Students from around the state designed the 14 sails to reflect what freedom meant to them. When completely assembled the Freedom Ship stood 11 feet high, 7 feet long, and 4 feet wide. UPS crated and transported the ship across Iowa for displays.

UPS supplied volunteers who assisted throughout the celebration day, and delivered one of the main attractions, Mr. Chuck Davis and his team of African Dance artists. They provide more than \$30,000 in support for the day’s event. The Iowa District Community Relations Division of UPS has been a major force in making the I’ll Make Me a World in Iowa such a huge success.

Attorney from Ghana Visits ICRC



Abena (Margaret) Manful from Accra, Ghana, recently spent six weeks as an intern at the Commission. Manful is an attorney with the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, an independent institution founded in 1992. The agency deals with

human rights matters, including corruption and abuse of power by public officials.

Manful’s visit was sponsored by the U.S. State Department and the Public Affairs Division of the U.S. Embassy in Accra. Local sponsors were the Council for International Understanding, Des Moines, and the University of Indiana. She had asked to be placed in an agency similar to hers, and ICRC was chosen to host her.

While here she participated in and learned about all aspects of our work, as well as visiting other state and private agencies working in related fields. Manful stated that she learned that it seemed more efficient to separate the enforcement process from the education and advocacy functions, as we have done here in Iowa.

Manful described Accra as a large city with very heavy traffic; thus she was surprised how easy it was to move about in Des Moines. Staff hosted her in their homes and in visiting many sites in Des Moines and the surrounding area, so that she could see a cross section of city and rural life in Iowa. When asked what other things that she found surprising, she said that she was surprised at how fast the weather changes here. She also was surprised at the large number of elderly people who live alone, and even younger people living alone, as it is the custom in her country for the extended family to stay together.

Much as she enjoyed her visit, Manful was eager to return to her family. Her husband, who trained as a chemical engineer, teaches math in a private high school. They have three children.

Manful summed up her experience by saying she found real friendship with the people at ICRC. Staff knows that we now have a friend on the other side of the globe. Fortunately, we can all stay in touch through the wonders of e-mail.

ICRC Completes Work on HUD Multifamily Housing Accessibility Project

With the final presentation on September 29, 2000, ICRC staff completed the public portion of the HUD grant on Multifamily Housing Accessibility. A total of 28 presentations were made around the state with a program that explained the fair housing laws and the requirements of these laws in regard to persons with disabilities. The programs were planned, written, and presented by Carol Anne Leach, civil rights specialist, and Frank Tribble, training officer.

The sessions were attended by 196 persons. While this was lower than the hoped for participation, those who attended had a need to know this information or had a personal or professional interest in the topic. In some cities, lively discussions were sparked, and attendees frequently remarked, "I wish more people had come to hear this message."

Some common questions and comments surfaced from the discussions, or were mentioned in the evaluations. These are some of the frequently expressed concerns:

- There are many difficulties and disparities with the various building codes and legal requirements. People are confused about who's covered by which codes, and are not sure how to comply. They often don't have the information they need and are not sure where to get it.
- People in the building industry want more technical information, "nuts and bolts" on the specific requirements.
- Housing consumers had questions about financial assistance available to help tenants and owners with the cost of modifications to existing housing units.
- Suggestions were made for more testing and monitoring of multifamily housing being built, and for increased enforcement of the laws.
- A clearinghouse or other mechanism to inform consumers about the availability of accessible or adaptable housing was suggested.
- A positive result was bringing people together within the same community to start talking about accessibility issues. In several locations, people were still talking after the presenters had left.

In the first phase of the project, 3,500 packets of information were mailed out to persons with disabilities, advocacy organizations, city building code departments,

ICRC Volunteer Wins Governor's Award



Richard Ivis, an ICRC volunteer for the past year, recently received the Governor's Volunteer Award. The ceremony was held at Camp Dodge in Johnston and volunteers from around the state were honored.

Ivis works as a file copier, an important part of case processing. Files for completed investigations must be copied for submission to EEOC and HUD, and to fulfill requests from attorneys for cases involved in litigation. Ivis keeps his work organized and gets the copying done, even if it means he needs to come in the office for extra time.

In 1976 Ivis was critically injured in an automobile accident and was in a coma for six months. Although he still has physical challenges, his recovery has been remarkable. He likes volunteering because he enjoys working with people and doing something useful. His dependability, diligence and good cheer have been much appreciated by Commission staff. He is a valued member of our office family.

In other volunteer news, Janet Parker has retired from her volunteer position with ICRC. Parker had been a volunteer for seven years, with six of those years being spent as a screener.

Parker was a previous recipient of the Governor's Volunteer Award for her work with our agency. Thank you, Janet, for a job well done!

Ivis and Parker were guests at a reception hosted by ICRC staff to recognize their contributions to the agency.



builders, and architects. The packets contained "What the Law Requires," the "Fair Housing Guide," "Accessibility Review of Multifamily Housing," and a schedule of the planned presentations.

The project was a first step in making people aware of the requirements for accessible multifamily housing, but much remains to be done to achieve the goal of all new construction of multifamily housing having the required accessibility features. ■

**Revised Harassment Factsheets
Published**

The ICRC FactSheets on Harassment have been revised and published. "Harassment in the Workplace: It's Against the Law" and "Sample Policy Prohibiting Harassment in the Workplace" have widened their focus to cover all types of harassment. Information on sexual harassment is incorporated into the text, as well as the latest interpretations from the U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

To request copies of these FactSheets, call 1-800-457-4416, ext. 1-8086.



Mark Your Calendars!
January 27, 2001
*"I'll Make Me a World in
Iowa"*
Celebration
State Historical Building
600 E. Locust Street
Des Moines, IA

Important Changes Ahead for the *Communicator!*

In the coming months, several changes are planned in the production and distribution of the ICRC newsletter, the *Communicator*. Increased costs of printing and mailing the hard copy have made it necessary to look at new and different ways to get the message out to the public.

We are planning to do the newsletter in a different computer program so it may be more easily accessed on our web page. Now that so many people have access to the Internet at their office or their home, it just makes sense to use this tool more.

We are asking our readers who have access to the Internet to use that method of connecting with us for the newsletter. For those who cannot do this, we still plan to distribute print copies. If we do not hear back from you, we will remove your name from the mailing list. If you no longer wish to receive the *Communicator*, please let us know. Since the newsletters are mailed U.S. Bulk Mail, the copies are not forwarded or returned to us if they cannot be delivered. We would like to eliminate this wasted expense.

Please complete and return the following to us:

_____ Will you access the *Communicator* from our webpage (www.state.ia.us/government/crc)?

_____ Do you want to receive the printed copy of the *Communicator*?

_____ Do you want to have your name removed from the *Communicator* mailing list?

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(or attach copy of mailing label)

Return to: Dawn Peterson

Iowa Civil Rights Commission, 211 East Maple St., 2nd Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309-1858

Quotable Quotes

A young child ... asks his mother why the man in the grocery store is so dark. Instead of answering, his mother tells him to be quiet, which tells the child it's not okay to discuss differences.

Beverly Daniel Tatum

Our young must be taught that racial peculiarities do exist, but that beneath the skin, beyond the differing features and into the true heart of being, fundamentally, we are more alike, my friend, than we are unlike.

Maya Angelou

There are many persons ready to do what is right because in their hearts they know it is right. But they hesitate, waiting for the other fellow to make the first move – and he, in turn waits for you. The minute a person whose word means a great deal dares to take the openhearted and courageous way, many others follow.

Marian Anderson

None of us alone can save the nation or world. But each of us can make a positive difference if we commit ourselves to do so.

Cornel West

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www.state.ia.us/government/crc**

**Corlis Moody,
Executive Director**

Carol Anne Leach, Editor

We can help you with your training needs!

- Commission staff is available for presentations on a variety of civil rights topics, such as:
 - Overview of State and Federal Civil Rights Laws
 - Equal Employment Opportunity Practices
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Appreciating Diversity
 - Appreciating Diversity for Schools
 - Fair Housing
 - Harassment, and Sexual Harassment
 - Overview of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission: Who We Are and What We Do
- Lending library of videos on civil rights topics: the videos are available for loan for a small fee. See the complete list at:
www.state.ia.us/government/crc
- Publications about the Commission and civil rights are available for free. See webpage for list.

Our services are free.

To access any of these resources, call

Dawn Peterson

1-800-457-4416, ext. 1-8086, or 515-281-8086

dawn.peterson@icrc.state.ia.us

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