

Our Vision: A state free of discrimination.

## Iowa Civil Rights Commission

# Communicator

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### From the Desk of the Executive Director....

By Corlis Moody



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### *Regional Conference on Race to be Held in Des Moines*

The Upper Midwest Regional Network will be hosting the second annual Conference on Race Thursday, May 15 and Friday, May 16 at Drake University in Des Moines. The one and one-half day conference will feature keynote speakers and workshops dealing with race, racism, and building inclusive communities. Businesses, groups, and individuals will all be able to take home valuable information from this timely conference. Last year approximately 240 people from Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa attended the first Conference on Race in Minneapolis/St. Paul. It is anticipated that the turnout will be even greater this year since people from Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri have been invited as well. The planning committee is very excited about this year's conference. If you are interested in volunteering to help with the conference, please give the Iowa Civil Rights Commission a call at 515-281-8084. There are several subcommittees (logistics, programming, budget, registration, publicity, and evaluation); and we would welcome your participation. More detailed information regarding registration and program will be coming out soon. Even if you are not able to help with the conference, we hope you will be able to join us on May 15 and 16 for this year's Conference on Race.

### *Iowa Civil Rights Commission Receives New FHIP Grant*

The Department of Housing and Urban Development recently announced the awarding of \$20.3 million in grants to fair housing groups in 78 cities around the country to fight illegal housing discrimination in America. HUD received applications from 225 groups for the fiscal year 2002 assistance. Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) grants went to 99 groups, including the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.

The Iowa Civil Rights Commission will receive \$98,543. Through its "Expanding the Dream—Providing the Tools to Ensure Sufficient Accessible Housing in Iowa Program", the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) plans to increase the awareness of individuals with disabilities, their family members, and groups and organizations who advocate on their behalf regarding housing accessibility, and to increase the capacity of the Iowa private bar to assist those who come forward to file fair housing complaints. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission will accomplish this by collaborating with other entities to develop a consumers' guide to housing accessibility and design. This guide, which will be published in print and in Braille, and made available via the Internet, will provide information on what the law requires and options to consider with respect to housing accessibility. Staff from the ICRC, in collaboration with staff from Legal Services Corporation of Iowa, will conduct several workshops that focus on the information outlined in the consumer's guide as well as the fair housing rights of disabled seniors. A seminar for attorneys in the Volunteer Lawyers Project will also be conducted, which will endeavor to increase the capacity of the Iowa private bar to assist victims of housing discrimination, particularly as it relates to the rights of the disabled.

*Anyone who believes they have experienced housing discrimination should call the Iowa Civil Rights Commission at 515-281-8086 or toll free in Iowa – 800-457-4416.*

## ***GLBT Forum Huge Success***

On Wednesday, February 5, 2003, the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) Youth in Iowa Schools Task Force hosted a forum entitled, “**Making Our Schools Safe for GLBT Students,**” at the Ames Municipal Auditorium. The forum was designed to dispel myths about GLBT youth, address current law and religious beliefs about sexual orientation, and offer solutions for assuring the safety of GLBT youth in schools as it impacts on their ability to learn and achieve.

More than 200 people attended the forum that was funded in part by Humanities Iowa. The forum included a panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Mary Sawyer, associate professor of religious studies at Iowa State University. Panelists included Dr. Carolyn Cutrona, psychologist, interim director of the Institute for Social and Behavioral Research at Iowa State University, and parent of a lesbian student; Dr. Rev. David Ruhe, senior minister, Plymouth Congregational Church, Des Moines; Kathy Collins, attorney, director of legal services, School Administrators of Iowa; Nick Pace, instructor and student teaching coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, and former teacher and principal in several rural Iowa school districts; and Emily Simmering, high school student from Iowa City.

The panel discussion was followed by a question and answer session. Response to the forum was extremely positive and the GLBT Youth in Iowa Schools Task Force is currently evaluating what further actions need to be taken. In addition to the forum, the GLBT Task Force is making informational and resource packets available at educational conferences. The GLBT Youth in Iowa Schools Task Force is a coalition of Iowa education, civil rights and GLBT organizations.

## ***Grants Fund Successful Project to Reach Immigrants and Employers***

In January 2002, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, in collaboration with the Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, the Iowa Division of Latino Affairs, Iowa Department of Workforce Development, Iowa Department of Economic Development, Legal Services Corporation of Iowa, the Immigrants Rights Project, and the Iowa Association of Business and Industry, began a project to do presentations on the Fair Housing and Fair Employment rights of immigrants. The goal of this project was to reach immigrant communities and employers across the state of Iowa. The project was funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Justice.

As a result of this project information on Fair Housing and Fair Employment reached more than 500 immigrants and more than 300 employers, via 50 presentations around the state. The 500 immigrants served represented Latino, Sudanese, Bosnian, Vietnamese, and Laotian communities. Also as a result of this project, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission was also able to get materials concerning the fair housing and fair employment

rights of immigrants into the hands of over 20,000 individuals and employers who might need the information.

Through this project, a great deal was learned about effectively getting information to the immigrant communities throughout our state. Essentially we learned:

- 1) We needed to find a person who is well respected and works directly with the particular immigrant community in the town or city where we wanted to do the presentation, to take on the position of champion for the presentation, to get the word out and encourage people to attend. This might be a priest, a minister, a nun, a teacher, etc. Then we needed to find out from this person when people in the community normally get together.
- 2) Based on the information from the community contact person, we then scheduled presentations in conjunction with the event that would typically bring the particular immigrant community together. For Latino communities, this often meant scheduling the presentation immediately following a Spanish-language mass at the church. For other groups it meant presenting in conjunction with a normally scheduled religious service or meeting of the group or tying the presentation in with an ESL class. This meant often giving the presentations on weekends.

Since the beginning of this project, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission has seen the number of filings in employment and housing based on national origin double. National origin filings in employment are currently running at about 7.6 %. Last fiscal year national origin complaints accounted for 4.4 % of filings.

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## ***Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. Holds Annual Awards Luncheon***

This year the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. held its annual awards celebration at a luncheon at the Younker's Tea Room on Thursday, October 3. This year's event was inspirational to all who attended. This year's award winners were:

### **Johnie Hammond**

Senator Johnie Hammond has long been at the forefront of the legislative struggles for the rights of women and children, and those discriminated against because of race, disability, age, sexual orientation, or religion. She served six terms in the Iowa House of Representatives and is finishing her second term in the Iowa Senate. Measures to strengthen the Iowa Civil Rights Act have always been supported by Senator Hammond and many have been introduced by her. She has stood up to opponents who have held a majority of the votes and convinced enough of the opposition to support measures that provide much needed child care, job opportunity and training, health care for women and children, education and assistance for teenage pregnancy prevention, all of which have made the transformation of our welfare reform program more helpful than punitive. Johnie was

not alone in her efforts but she was very often the person whose speaking up encouraged others to act.

### Warren Morrow

Warren Morrow, seeing that Latino youth are underserved in Iowa, began Latino Leadership Project (LLP) in 1998 with several Grinnell students. As the director of LLP, Warren develops, implements and administers programs specifically aimed at encouraging Latino students to become leaders at school, home and in the work force. Under his leadership, LLP has accomplished much: the summer leadership program, which has a follow-up program during the academic year; the LLP Youth Conference; and scholarships for post secondary education. In addition, Warren works with the Boys and Girls Club and spearheaded the first Latino Festival Student Day earlier this year. Warren demonstrates drive and professionalism. Through the LLP, one can see that Warren will be an instrumental force between higher education and the Latino students in Des Moines.

### Maria Rundquist

Maria Rundquist has worked very hard to help Latinos be appreciated, employed, and above all valued as human beings. She is very sincere in her help and goes far beyond the call of duty to help those in need. She not only teaches English as a Second Language in a school setting but she also teaches individuals privately. She has founded the Siouxland City Youth Soccer team and helped in the founding of the Siouxland Diversity Coalition. She has been known to support those who are struggling with poor employers and those in need of protection from violence. For Maria, being out there to help who you can is essential, and what we should all be doing for one another.

### Sandra Sanchez

Sandra Sanchez is an outspoken advocate for the Latino community, no matter how controversial the subject. She has never refused to help out a family or individual, no matter how busy she has been. Starting as a volunteer, she took advantage of her first-hand experience and educational opportunities to make herself a recognized expert on immigration matters. Through jobs at the Des Moines Public Schools and Family Violence Center, she continued to enhance her capacity to serve the still growing Latino immigrant population. As director of the Immigrant Rights Project, she developed a rural and urban community model designed to facilitate the inclusion of Latino immigrants in their communities. Sandra has reached a goal that many of us only aspire to - to be a community leader who has demonstrated commitment, dedication and volunteerism to a significant and worthwhile cause. In this case, it is work that is designed to improve the quality of life not only of immigrants and refugees, but also of other community members.

### American Friends Service Committee, Central Region

American Friends Service Committee Central Region is committed to nonviolence and equality for all. Their work brings the light of hope to places darkened by violence, injustice, and despair. AFSC weaves peace, justice, and empowerment in all that it does. Through its many projects, AFSC advocates for immigrant rights, worker justice, and

criminal justice free from racial profiling. AFSC educates youth to learn about other cultures, African American youth to develop leadership, and immigrants with "Know Your Rights" workshops.

### Eddie Moore, Jr.

Eddie Moore, Jr. has pursued and achieved success in the world of academia. Eddie received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa. After graduating, he returned to Florida to coach and teach high school for a short time. He later returned to Iowa to attend Loras College where he earned a Master's degree in Educational Administration. He is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Social Foundations at the University of Iowa. As he pursues his degree, he continues to provide diversity training for businesses, schools and city governments. For the last four years, he has coordinated the White Privilege Conference. While doing all of this, he is the Director of Intercultural Life at Central College.

### Podolefsky Law Office

Ronnie L. Podolefsky is an attorney in Waterloo, Iowa practicing in the areas of civil rights, employment discrimination and harassment, and related constitutional issues. Ronnie served four years on the national board of the National Organization for Women and was twice elected president of the Iowa state chapter of the National Organization for Women. She is a winner of the Robert S. Hunt Award in Constitutional History. Her article "The Illusion of Suffrage: Female Voting Rights and the Women's Poll Tax Repeal Movement After the Nineteenth Amendment," published in both the Notre Dame Law Review and the Columbia Journal of Gender and Law, won the National Feminist Jurisprudence Writing Competition. Ronnie is constantly focused on the client. It is not uncommon for her to drop everything at a moment's notice to help a client, or for her and her staff to stay late because a client meeting is taking hours. Ronnie's heart and mind are in the best interest of civil rights in Iowa.

### Bankers Trust

Bankers Trust is a leader in the promotion and support of diversity in the workplace and in the community. Through its hiring and promotion practices, Bankers Trust actively promotes cultural enrichment in the employment setting. Bankers Trust strives to create an environment where all employees feel supported to attain their greatest potential. It regularly reviews raises, bonuses, and promotions to ensure fairness. It supports a quarterly Lunch and Learn program designed to bring representatives of various cultures to come speak with employees about their heritage during lunch or brunch. In the community, Bankers Trust is a leader as well. It has an advertising campaign highlighting the holidays, customs and practices of various cultures that educates the public about the richness of different cultures and the importance of all cultures to our community. Bankers Trust is truly at the forefront of nurturing and supporting the importance of diversity.

### Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.

Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. is a Dupont business that employs about 5000 people worldwide. Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. is committed to helping improve the quality

of life in the communities where its customers and employees live and work through philanthropic investments. Pioneer seeks to invest resources in programs that add economic or social value to its communities and stakeholders, to expand its reputation as a good corporate citizen, and to initiate collaborative funding programs that address rural, economic and social issues. Pioneer has long been a leader in the promotion and support of programs that involve the value of diversity.

### Iowa Asian Alliance

Even though the Iowa Asian Alliance was formed just eight months ago, it has accomplished a great deal in that short period of time. The goals of the Iowa Asian Alliance are to be a collaborative and centralized point of contact to and for all diverse Asian American groups, as well as a resource center for the Iowa community. The Iowa Asian Alliance has become the leader in the Asian American community to promote and inform its community about the rights of employees in the work place. It has organized and promoted diversity training regarding Asian Americans for all Iowans. The Iowa Asian Alliance is a leader in creating an environment where Asian people are well-informed and all Iowans can have a greater understanding of Asian cultures.

### Outside In

The Outside In Group is a group of 38 men and women who were instrumental in the publication of Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838-2000 by The State Historical Society of Iowa in December 2001. The work of this group will advance Civil Rights in Iowa by showing throughout the book's 600 pages that African-American History is a history of an inseparable, intertwined relationship that binds blacks and whites together. In other words, Outside In reveals that the African-American history of Iowa is our history, a story for all Iowans wrapped in what Martin Luther King, Jr. called "a web of mutuality." This perspective and the wondrous photographs that grace almost every page, will shatter stereotypes and

advance the truth that Iowans and Americans are one people of one blood. By showing the connections between us, especially the ones between us and those we consider "outsiders," Outside In testifies to the truth that the actions of each and every one of us, collectively, make up our real history. Such a vision of history should help take us and our descendents beyond the lies of race and racism and closer to the promised land of equality, justice, fraternity, and freedom.

## Mark Your Calendar Dates

April 9-12

### **4<sup>th</sup> Annual White Privilege Conference**

Central College, Pella

May 15 and 16

### **Upper Midwest Regional Network**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference on Race**

Drake University, Des Moines

Fall, 2003

### **Statewide Diversity Conference**

Polk County Convention Center, Des Moines

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