



AMES HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT
for 2012

Submitted March 22, 2013

AMES HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
2012 Annual Report

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*Members**

Aaron Fultz, Chair
Devita Harden
Amy Juhnke
Amy Longnecker[†]
John Klaus
Amit Shah[†]
Lea Vogl[†]
Barbara Woods

*Note that the AHRC became a five-member commission as of November 13, 2012.

[†]No longer a member of the Commission.

Hearing Officers

Sean Smith

Investigative & Conciliation Officers

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Dan Brown | Tim Ellett |
| Elaine Phompheng | Phil Squibb |
| Johanna Turner | |

Introduction

In 2012 the Ames Human Relations Commission continued its work to educate the community, promote diversity and inclusion, and celebrate hard-working individuals and organizations in our community. The Commission again provided planning and support for City events like FACES of Ames and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Celebration. In addition, the Commission continued its collaboration with other groups and organizations to educate the public on legal and social welfare topics like fair housing and fair employment practices. We continue to look for ways to improve outreach to the community and fulfill our mission of education and conflict resolution.

As always, we welcome any and all input from the Council.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration (2013)¹ / Humanitarian Award

The celebration of the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the largest for Ames in many years. Wayne Clinton, a former Ames middle-school teacher and current member of the Story County Board of Supervisors, served as the master of ceremonies, and remarked on his own childhood experiences with discrimination and segregation. Dr. Anthony Jones, the assistant principal at the Ames Middle School, gave the keynote address.

Elementary school students from throughout Ames, led by Charles Grim, sang two versions of the song “Martin Luther King” as a remembrance to Dr. King. Sarah Bartlett of the Volunteer Center of Story County talked about the community projects undertaken by local volunteers, and Dani Stack of the ISU Student Athlete Advisory Committee spoke about the importance of service in the community. The program closed with the singing of “We Shall Overcome” by the audience.

Birthday cake was served prior to the main program in the Ames Middle School cafeteria, accompanied by the Ames High School Jazz Band led by Andrew Buttermore.

Among his many notable contributions, Dr. King emphasized service to others. The Human Relations Commission honored that message when it presented Debra Lee with the 2013 Ames Humanitarian Award. Ms. Lee has been exceptionally active in the Oak/Riverside neighborhood, helping people to get to know one another and having meetings in her own home to resolve differences between neighbors or between her neighborhood and the City. She was also a founding board member of Housing for Sustainable Neighborhoods, working with City officials to improve and strengthen the City’s health and safety code for rental housing. Finally, she was a member of the Mayor’s Inclusive Community Task Force and a strong leader in its work. She also served as a staff facilitator for the Ames Community Conversations on Race and Diversity, and went above and beyond her assigned duties to promote, organize, and monitor that group’s progress and its follow-up activities.

1 A summary of the 2012 celebration appeared in the annual report for 2011.



(L to R) Wayne Clinton, Debra Lee, Aaron Fultz

Fair Housing Forum

On April 17, the Ames Human Relations Commission joined with the Department of Planning and Housing, the Central Iowa Board of Realtors, the Ames Rental Association, and Hunziker Property Management in presenting the Fair Housing Month Forum. The special guest of the forum was Betty J. Bottiger, Director, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The goal of this forum was to increase understanding of fair housing issues. Participants engaged in role-playing exercises followed by sharing experiences as housing providers, tenants, and buyers. The event was well attended and will probably occur again during Fair Housing Month in 2013.

Public Outreach on Fair Hiring Practices

In June the AHRC partnered with the Cyclone Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management to host a free education session on fair hiring practices. Hosted in the Ames City Council Chambers, the two-hour event featured panelists from the legal and human resources fields. Panelists focused on employer rights and obligations when hiring employees.

Over 30 attendees learned about topics such as appropriate interview procedures, documentation such as job descriptions and handbooks/policies, background and reference checks, equal opportunity requirements, applicant skill testing, and protected classes.

AMOS Collaboration

During this year, conversation was undertaken with Mary Richards, Heather Withers and David Digby, representatives from A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy (AMOS). The purpose was to consider a collaboration with the commission around a “real community dialog on prejudice.” AMOS shared information on a group called “The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond,” which would bring a multi-day educational seminar to Ames. The collaboration

is still under consideration. AMOS is expected to provide additional information that will assist the commission in determining its course of action.

Friends of Iowa Civil Rights Awards

John Klaus attended the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights Award Luncheon on October 19th at the Iowa Event Center in Des Moines. It was an opportunity to meet and form connections with State and City Civil Rights Agency professionals and volunteers. Awards were presented to the African American Museum of Iowa, Chrysalis, and Elizabeth Kruidenier.

The African American Museum is located in Cedar Rapids. It is an educational resource on African American History and showcases the contributions of African Americans to the development and culture of Iowa. Chrysalis is an organization that exists to aid and support girls and women in the Des Moines area in becoming community leaders. Elizabeth Kruidenier was a lifetime advocate of civil rights in Iowa and a founding member of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. She died in October 2011.

FACES of Ames

The City enjoyed another successful celebration of inclusion and diversity at FACES of Ames in September. Many hundreds gathered in Bandshell Park to meet each other and learn from the more than 50 organizations that participated. Live entertainment was again a key attraction as a wide range of groups and individuals performed in the Bandshell. Several local businesses provided refreshments for the large crowd.



Lois Smidt served as the master of ceremonies. She talked with and inspired the crowd to join together and accept one another as an interwoven community. She also engaged the performers in brief interviews to educate attendees.

FACES of Ames is an almost all-volunteer effort that was managed this year primarily by the Commission, which took over from United Ames. Many thanks are owed to former Commission member Amber Corrieri, and to Edna Clinton. In addition, acting Library Director Lynn Carey and the organizers of the Maximum Ames Music Festival organized the entertainment, and Maximum Ames provided sound equipment and technical assistance. Several city staff members provided much-needed administrative and logistical support, both during the planning stages and on the day of the event.

Volunteer recruitment efforts were widespread throughout the community and resulted in full staffing for the event. Traditional and social media avenues were used to

connect potential volunteers with specific volunteer opportunities. From these efforts, volunteers represented diverse backgrounds, school-age through adults, scouts and college students, and adults from various community organizations. Many of the college students used their participation as part of their course requirements.

The Commission has begun discussions regarding the purpose of FACES of Ames and whether the event achieves a significant purpose for the City. The Commission plans to proceed with planning for the 2013 event, though discussion may result in major changes in 2014. As always, the Commission is deeply grateful for the Council's monetary support of FACES of Ames and its input regarding the event.

New Brochure

The AHRC brochure was updated to better communicate the commission's core function and the resources available to the public. The new brochure contains more direct language and a user-friendly flow of information so that all members of the public can understand the process of reporting a case and the Commission's mission and authority.

4th of July

The Commission did not participate in the City's 4th of July parade in 2012 because of scheduling conflicts. The Commission plans to resume its participation in 2013.

Complaints

The Commission handled three complaints in 2012, though none resulted in a full hearing before the Commission. Notably, however, the office of the City Manager frequently receives housing and employment related inquiries, most of which do not generate complaints based on discriminatory activity.

The Commission is currently considering whether to retain investigators and hearing officers, and obtain more training for all persons related to the Commission, or to contract with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to address complaints.

Goals

The Commission will continue working on many of its prior goals, like supporting the Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Celebration, increasing its participation in community events, and educating the public regarding discrimination. Based on recent strategic planning discussions, the Commission anticipates undertaking the following projects or endeavors during 2013 and 2014:

***Have you
been treated
unfairly?***



**DISCRIMINATION IS
AGAINST THE LAW.**

The Ames Human Relations
Commission was established to
address discriminatory issues in our
community.

Facilitating educational opportunities and outreach regarding tenant-landlord relationships, and welcoming new residents to Ames.

Educating the public about who may be in a protected classification, and discriminatory versus non-discriminatory activities.

Determining the impact of bullying in our community, facilitating public discussion, and educating the public regarding ways to deal with bullying.

Educating the public on ways to use the Commission as a resource.

Appreciation for Sheila Lundt

The Commission would like to extend our deepest appreciation and thanks to former Assistant City Manager Sheila Lundt. Her knowledge and insight as the liaison to this Commission were invaluable. On behalf of ourselves and past members of the Commission, we wish her the very best in retirement, and we hope to see her at future community events.

We also pause to express our thanks to many other City staff members for their enthusiasm and assistance. Their efforts makes our job immeasurably easier and more productive.