

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: FUNDING TO CONTINUE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES**

**BACKGROUND:**

On August 4, a Community Conversations on Diversity update meeting was held at the Ames Public Library. Attached are notes from that meeting. As a number of projects that grow out of the original Community Conversations are at, or near completion, the participants discussed the community impact made and the needs for the future.

The group discussions also resulted in the identification of the following actions for the upcoming year:

1. Create a new advisory board to coordinate the activities of the 4 Action Teams (Strengthening Neighborhoods, One Community, Welcome Fest, Education First).
2. Pursue 501(c)(3) status later, in order to be able to accept contributions from businesses, governments and individuals.
3. Continue the organized conversations and recruit underrepresented groups for involvement.
4. Support the AmeZone Youth Group as a possible action team.
5. Create a new name for the effort, possibly "United Ames."

**The services of a year-long VISTA worker have been secured from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. Josh Kriz will begin work with the City the week of September 20, and he will continue the excellent work provided by Adam Cotton and Laura Logsdon. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission has requested that the City help finance a portion (\$2,000) for this person's time.**

**In addition, in order for the VISTA worker to be successful in this endeavor an additional \$3,000 is needed for a computer, for office supplies, for the Street'N'Greet (insurance, etc.), and for general support for the Action Teams.**

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The City Council can approve the request to allocate \$5,000 from the 2009/10 fiscal year Contingency Account to provide the City's portion of the VISTA

worker's salary, support for the Street'N'Greet, and general assistance for the Action Teams.

2. The City Council can deny this request.

**MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

It appears that the follow-up efforts from the Community Conversations have yielded a positive impact on the community. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1 and approve the request to allocate \$5,000 from the 2009/10 fiscal year Contingency Account to provide the City's portion of the VISTA worker's salary, support for the Street'N'Greet, and general assistance for the Action Teams.

The Council will, no doubt, want to know what the long-term commitment will be to this effort. It has been explained by the Iowa Civil Rights Commission's representative that it is expected citizen volunteers will assume responsibility for this effort in the future so that on-going financial support for the VISTA worker's salary will not be needed.

Community Conversations Meeting, 8/4/2009

In Attendance:

Laura Logsdon, Adam Cotton, Mayor Campbell, Sheila Lundt, Ralph Rosenberg, Debbie Gitchell, Dave Andrews, Barbara Woods, Sheryl Rippke, Jamie Larson, Jerry Chase, Jeff Benson, Clint Sloss, Jeff Benson, Cheryl Binzen, Lynne Carey, Amanda Martin, Heather Withers, Dan Rice, Bernadette Seibert, Vanessa Baker Latimer, Keith Schrag, Art Weeks, Michael Lazere, Shellie Orngard, Josh Kriz, Jim Davis

**Notes from small group discussions:**

Small Group 1

- 1.) Float under Story County Community Foundation (1% fee associated with accepting donations through them)
  - a. Take care of financial accounting ourselves
  - b. This would slow down the movement of funds for the organization
- 2.) What is our goal?
  - a. Need a mission/vision statement
  - b. Reinforce original goals of action teams
- 3.) What are the problems we're trying to address?
  - a. Racism
  - b. Community Expectations / Social norms
  - c. Poverty / Education
- 4.) Need involvement of faith community

Small Group 2

- 1.) In favor of an advisory board
  - a. Consider naming it a "coordinating board" instead
  - b. Representative of each action team
  - c. Would help sustain the organization
  - d. Keep communication open, strategic planning
  - e. Structure needs to be diversified and open, active
- 2.) Pursue 501(c)(3) status later
  - a. After a board has time to work for a year
- 3.) Need to continue the conversations
  - a. Open to public
  - b. Allow people to vent concerns in a constructive manner
  - c. Entry point for new residents to Ames, chance to become connected to community
  - d. Allow people to share about themselves
  - e. Have leaders who can speak on specific topics to focus conversations
  - f. Come to conclusions, solutions, action steps during these conversations

- g. "Inlet for involvement"
- 4.) Recruitment
  - a. Get involvement of ISU student government
  - b. Public forums / open dialogue
    - i. Get word out through these
    - ii. Build a strong base of support
  - c. Keep youth involved – AmeZone as an action team
- 5.) Need a new name – possibly "United Ames"

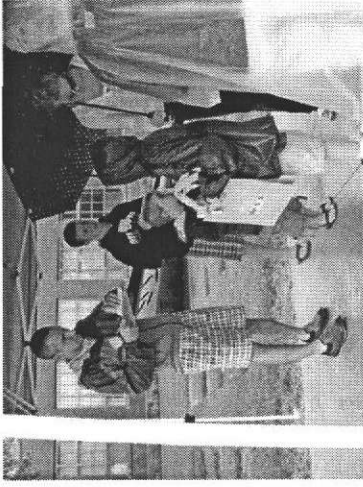
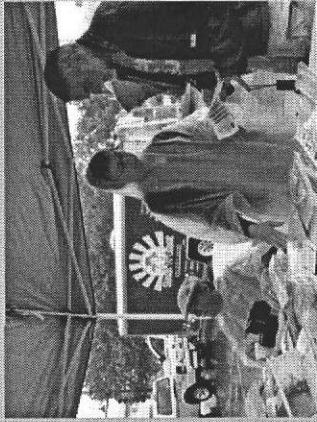
### Small Group 3

- 1.) Advisory Board – 15 people
  - a. Necessity
  - b. Need diverse group to participate
  - c. Youth involvement
  - d. Should have current participants and new people involved
  - e. Keep ISU Extension connected
  - f. Representative from faith community
  - g. Faculty / Staff from Ames Community Schools
  - h. Include VISTA
  - i. Could Meet monthly / quarterly
  - j. Need to publicize what's going on
- 2.) Steering Committee – 5 people
- 3.) "Ames Community Conversations" an activity, not the name of the organization
- 4.) Conversations
  - a. Have monthly conversations on various topics
  - b. Other topics to consider:
    - i. Transportation, poverty, women advocacy
  - c. Let people know what the topic is, encourage to consider the issues and participate in a discussion

### Notes from feedback

- Need to recruit – get people involved that haven't been, address the issues that started the conversations two years ago
- Interested in holding conversations in different neighborhoods around Ames to target specific population demographics
  - Could hold meetings at neighborhood churches
  - Use particular neighborhoods to discuss certain issues
  - Provide food, child care to allow more people to attend
  - Allow people to share expectations

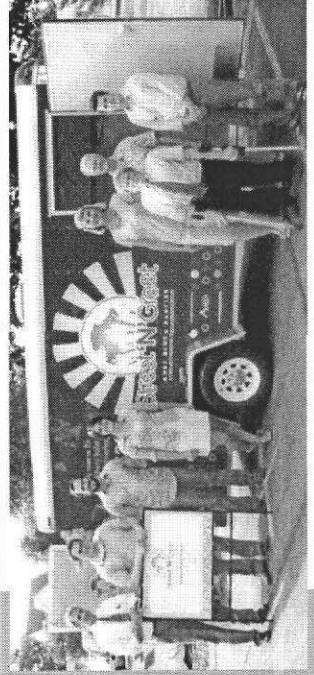
- Need to reiterate the original goals of each action group
- Advisory Board should have representatives from all over Ames community
  - Start with advisory board and have a smaller sub-set
  - Could meet once a month to represent Community Conversations, larger group meets quarterly
- Set structure may not be necessary – heart of the organization in the conversations
  - VISTA coordinates conversations
- “Team” or “Coordinating” board instead of “Advisory”
- Keep the “Welcome Wagon” concept – hold welcome events
- 501(c) (3) status:
  - Before establishing need a board
  - Can connect with Story County Foundation or City of Ames and have a coordinating group to work with them
- Use community members as mediators in certain situations instead of police
- What can we do now?
  - Survey for Ames?
  - Work on Mission statement?
  - Larger group discussion on goals – need more structure to review goals and action steps
  - Use notes from meeting to facilitate next conversations
  - Get landlords more involved in efforts
  - Plan conversations – quarterly for the public
  - Recruit new residents



# Ames Community Conversations on Diversity

August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009

7:00-8:30pm



# Overview

- Racial, class and ethnic tensions in Ames
- Public Input Session, April 3, 2008
- Open Forum, November 27, 2007 – 400 in attendance
- Public Input Session, April 5, 2008
- Inclusive Community Task Force, January 2007
- Action Forum, November 19, 2008
- 6 action teams created:
  - Strengthening Neighborhoods
  - Welcome Fest
  - One Community Coordination
  - United Ames
  - Ongoing Dialogues
  - Education First
- Iowa Civil Rights Commission VISTA project

– “The focus of the Task

Force’s effort is principally on changes that can be made by individuals and non-governmental institutions to foster greater understanding and better relations within the entire community.”

## What is Community Conversations?

- “We are a collaborative volunteer effort whose reason for being is helping Ames residents create a stronger, more welcoming community that works for all of us. We believe that together, we can become a community that proves **honest listening and sharing can lead to significant change** — for individuals, organizations and the larger community” (*Ames Iowa Community Conversations on Diversity, Fall 2008*).

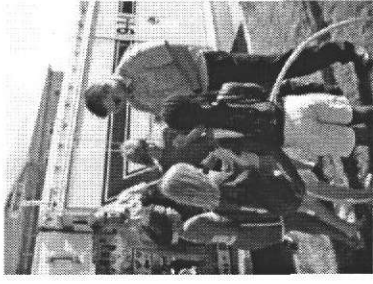
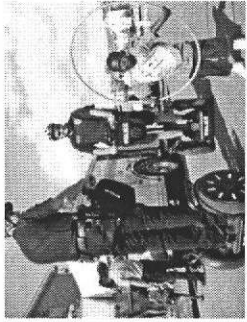
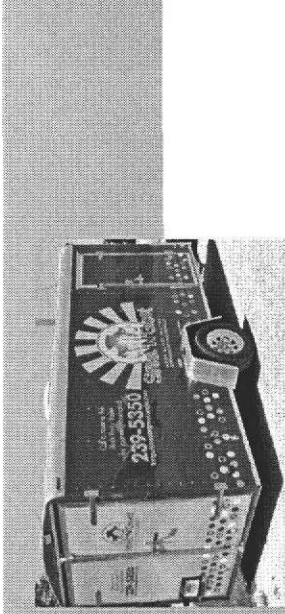


# Current Structure of Community Conversations

- **Four Action Teams:**
  - Strengthening Neighborhoods
  - One Community
  - Welcome Fest
  - Education First
- **Two AmeriCorps VISTA members**
  - Coordinating all action teams' projects
  - Capacity building
  - Forming partnerships
  - Building structure of Community Conversations
- **Little interaction or connection between action teams**
- **Support from City of Ames departments**
- **No centralized authority or leader of organization**
- **No legal status or shared bank account**

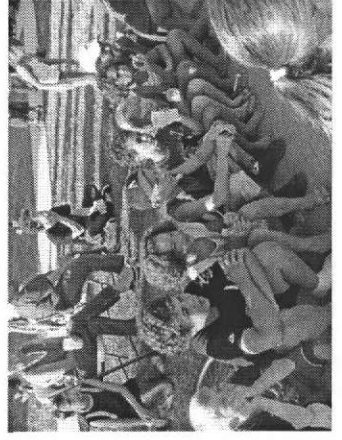
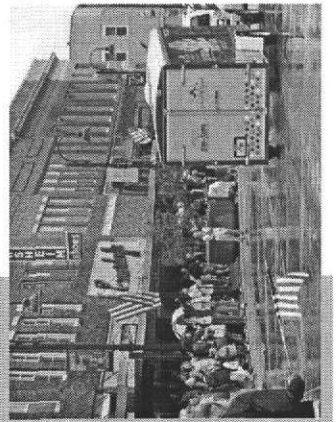
# Goals of Actions Teams

- **Strengthening Neighborhoods**
  - Striving to create a more welcoming and inclusive community by strengthening relationships within and between neighborhoods
- **One Community**
  - Creating sustainable means of coordinating activities and initiatives that promote inclusivity in the Ames community
- **Education First**
  - Connecting schools and the community to provide a welcoming and inclusive educational environment where all Ames families and students can thrive
- **Welcome Fest**
  - Seeking to welcome new residents to Ames and providing community info.
- **United Ames (joined with One Community Coordination)**
- **Ongoing Dialogues (inactive)**



# Strengthening Neighborhoods

- Street 'N' Greet Block Party Trailer ( <http://streetngreet.webs.com> )
  - Debuted at July 4<sup>th</sup> Pancake Breakfast and Parade
  - Available for any Ames resident over 18 to reserve for free
  - Comes with: tables, chairs, games, sound system, community info, first aid kit, barricades
  - Tripp St. block party – planned by AmeZone, VCSC, and City of Ames
  - Trailer reserved for every weekend except 2 through October
  - Media recognition – TV, radio, newspapers
  - Future Action Steps



# One Community

- “United Ames” youth motto and logo competition
  - Open to any Ames resident in K-12 age group
  - Asked to submit an idea for a motto or logo to describe what “United Ames” means to them
  - Drop-boxes at YSS, Boys and Girls Club, and Ames Public Library
    - Laura and Adam spoke to numerous youth groups at YSS and APL
    - Discussed competition on “Mel in the Morning” KASI radio
- Future Action Steps
  - Sustainability of Community Conversations
    - AmeriCorps VISTA
    - Ongoing conversations
    - Use of logo, motto, and overall concept of “United Ames”

“Ames Diversity, travelling the road of progress”

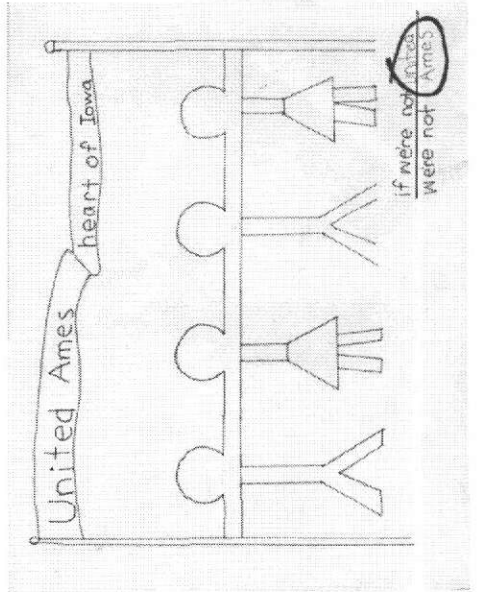
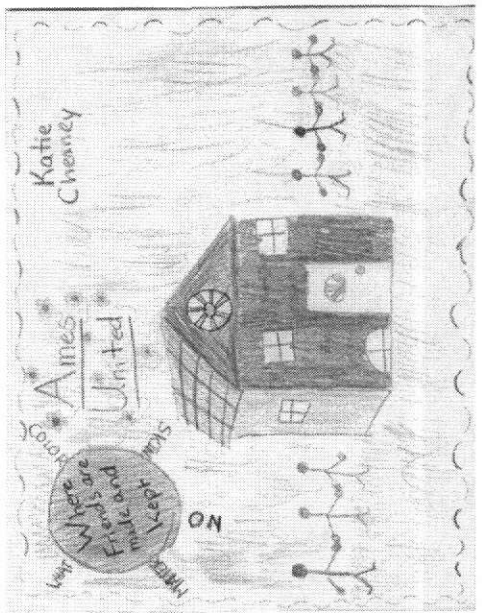
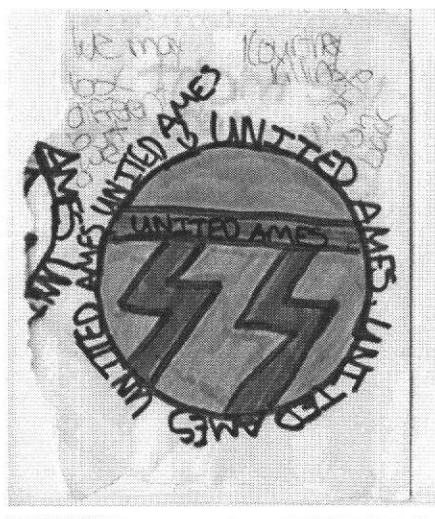
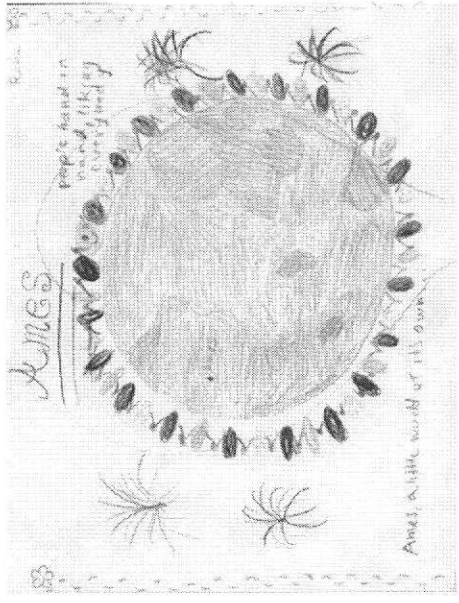
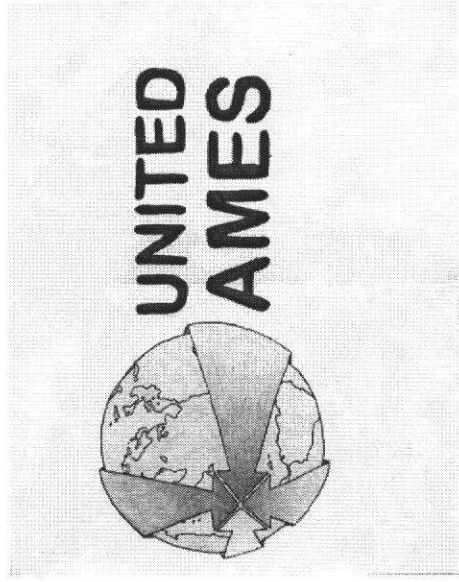
“Where friends are made and kept”

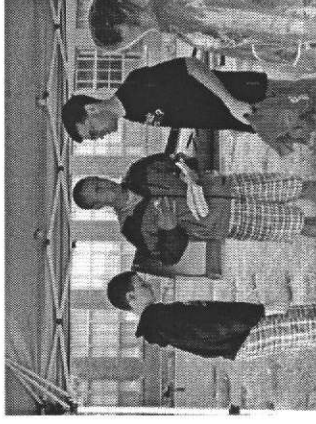
“We may look different but we are connected”

“If we're not united, we're not Ames”

“Opening our (arms or hearts) to others”

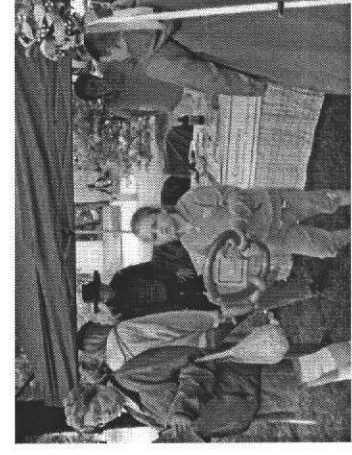
# “United Ames” Submissions





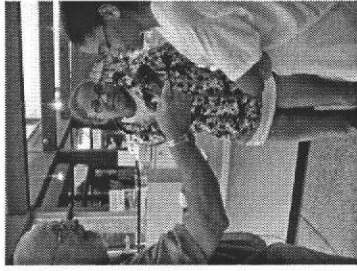
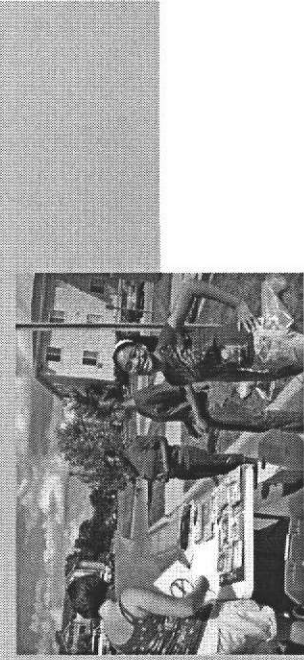
# Welcome Fest

- July 4<sup>th</sup> Pancake Breakfast and Bandsnell Park activities
  - Greeted over 1200 people with name tags
  - Encouraged interaction among residents at the breakfast and between Community Conversations volunteers
  - Dispensed community info. to new residents
    - City Departments , local services and resource guides
    - Advertised Street’N’Greet and “United Ames” competition
    - Joined by volunteers from the Ames Human Relations Commission
    - Compiled community info. used in Street’N’Greet trailer



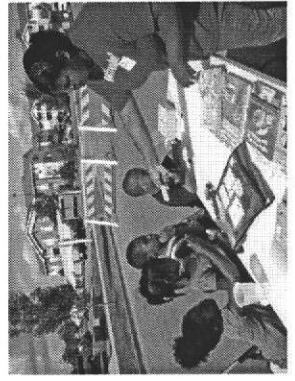
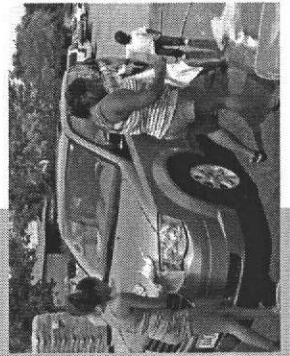
## Education First

- Planning to set-up an information booth about Ames Schools at the High School's Parent Night
  - Ames Community Tutoring Programs
  - Compiled List of Elementary PTOs / PTAs & Booster Clubs
  - List of AHS currently active clubs
  - Information about Education First
- “Ambassador Program” idea
  - Connect new families with long-term families through the schools



# AmeZone

- Began with meetings between City of Ames, Volunteer Center of Story County, ISU Extension, and Delta Academy
- First project: Tripp St. Block Party
- Focus of AmeZone
  - Volunteering (service learning), community building, and leadership
- Future of AmeZone
  - Meeting August 16, open to public
  - VCSC will umbrella group, VISTAs will continue to work as leaders
  - AmeZone as an Action Team of Community Conversations?





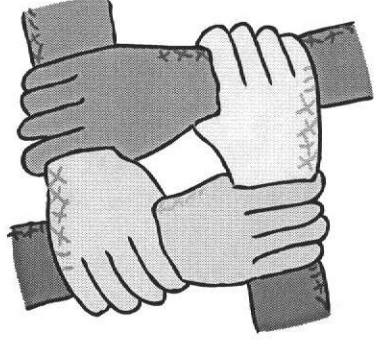


## AmeriCorps VISTA

- Adam Cotton, Laura Logsdon, Iowa Civil Rights Commission
  - Coordinating – Action Teams, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Street’N’Greet’s first block party, AmezOne
  - Capacity building – creating & maintaining websites, social networking sites, publicity efforts, grant-writing
  - Forming and maintaining partnerships – VCSC, IRIS, ISU Extension, 4-H, Boys and Girls Club, YSS, MSCD, MICA, APL, Beyond Welfare, Faith Communities, Delta Academy, Urban Dreams, City of Ames departments
  - Building structure of Community Conversations – Hiring new VISTA members, open communication within organization, central contact, current and future planned meetings
- Josh Kriz, Iowa Civil Rights Commission – Sept. 2009-2010

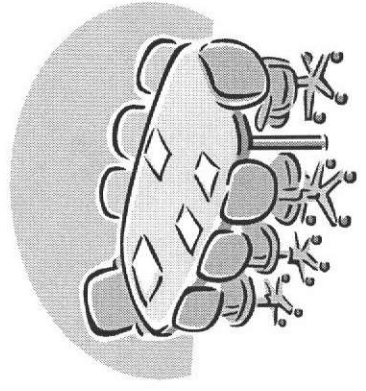
## How to keep the action teams connected

- Creating an advisory board
- Regularly scheduled meetings of the organization
  - Representatives of each group or open to anyone
- Planning community conversations together
- AmeriCorps VISTA member coordinating and informing organization
  - Not a permanent solution



# Creating an advisory board

- Actions & Ideas
  - Coordinate the action teams' work
  - Made up of representatives of each action team
  - Could meet monthly or once every two months
  - Inform other team members of projects, ways to collaborate, fundraising efforts
    - Board and treasurer would administer the bank account
  - Could rotate who are the members of the advisory board
  - Could plan community conversations

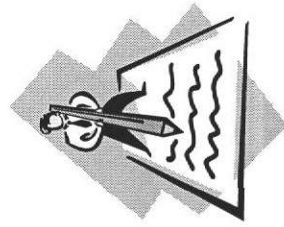


## Considering a new name

- Idea of making "United Ames" the new name for the organization
- "Ames Community Conversations on Diversity" could become the name of the conversations that are open to the public
- Applying for the One Iowa Award and Friends of Iowa Civil Rights Award as "United Ames"
  - One Iowa Award
    - Governor's office award for Diversity initiatives statewide
  - Friends of Iowa Civil Rights Award
    - Recognizes groups who've "championed the cause of civil rights"

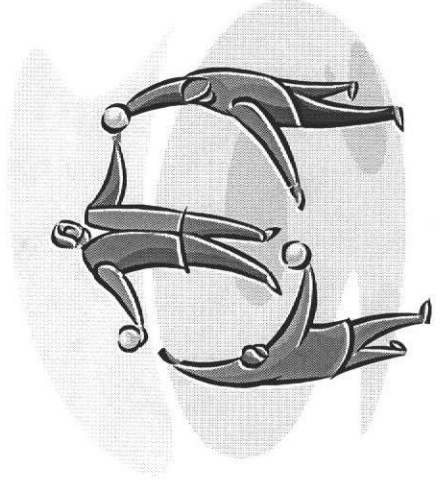
# Legal Status of the organization

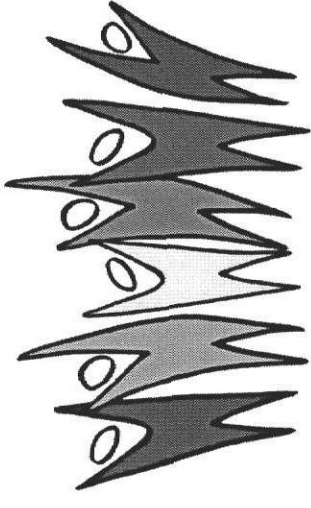
- 501(c)(3) status – needs:
  - Organize as a trust, association, or corporation
  - Exempt purpose: most likely as a civic league or social welfare organization 501(c)(4)
  - Submit Form 1023 or 1024 & user fee
  - Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
  - Financial statements for first year, projected 2-year budget, breakdown of revenue and expenses
- Formalize the structure of the group without applying for legal status
  - Create an advisory board
  - Open a bank account for whole organization
  - A treasurer and advisory board could have access
  - Action Teams could more easily fundraise



## Future community conversations

- Open to the public
- Creating new projects and even new action teams
- Place:
  - Could hold conversations at the Public Library
  - Different locations around Ames Community





# Recruitment

- How to draw more people into the organization
- Multiple community conversations
  - Held at different locations to draw specific demographics
- Target certain population demographics
  - Reaching out to socio-economically diverse populations
- Seek partnerships with more organizations and ISU

## Discussion Topics/Questions

- How to keep the action groups connected
  - Advisory board? Regular meetings of whole organization? VISTA?
- Creating an advisory board to coordinate the action teams' work
  - How often would the board meet? Who would be members?
- Considering a new name for the organization
  - “United Ames?”
- Legal status of the organization
  - Pursue 501(c)(3) status?
- A future community conversation – open to public
  - Where/when should it take place?
- Recruitment for the organization
  - Publicity efforts, speaking to target groups – who will do this?