

# *Together*

League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions Newsletter Vol.20 No.1 June 2006

## **“Huddled Masses, Hard Choices” is theme of annual LMHRC September 30 conference**

The Human Rights challenge of immigration will engage Human Rights Commissioners and advocates from across the state of Minnesota who will gather to listen to speakers and exchange ideas and news from their local communities. As in the past 34 years, a group of new and veteran human rights activists will seek inspiration and strategies for making this a more fair and equitable world.

The 35th annual all-day event will take place at the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center. Please see proposed agenda and registration form on the insert page.

### **LMHRC Information**

4100 Lakeview Ave. N.  
Robbinsdale, MN 55422

(763) 535-1051

On the web at:  
www.  
leagueofmnhumanrights.org

### **2005 Officers**

President	Larry Clark
Vice-President	Evelyn Staus
Secretary	Saeng Kue
Treasurer	Sonja Peterson
Editor	Marion Helland

## **City of Montgomery will establish a Human Rights Commission**

On January 3, 2006, the city of Montgomery agreed with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights to establish a Human Rights Commission within 6 months. Montgomery also agreed to communicate better in English and Spanish through a community newsletter, police cards, public notices and forums to help assimilate Latinos in the community.

Renae Oswald Anderson and Joshua Becerra from Neighborhood House conducted a workshop “Building Community in Montgomery, MN” on March 31 at the League of Cities offices in St. Paul. Marion Helland, Sonja Peterson and Mort Ryweck, attended the meeting on behalf of the League and continued discovering common ground and introducing key information on forming a Human Rights Commission. Participating were the Mayor, City Council and staff members from Montgomery.

## LMHRC Board continues capacity building

On March 25 approximately 20 League Board Members spent an entire Saturday exploring the past, present and future of the organization. Each person recalled individual history of human rights work in preparation to seeking the core of the League's role in human rights work.

The St. Thomas University offered a pleasant setting for intense deliberations. Facilitator Ann Johnson, Center for Non-profit Management Director, pushed the group to identify that illusive "Core." Just what is the League really about? The group had many wordy answers, but were urged to be succinct. What could fit on a bumper sticker or on a button? Just as they were about to give up and return another day, Barb Sanderson, Grand Rapids Commissioner, said, "The core is that the League links the Human Rights Commissions in Minnesota."

Aha! The key word is *link*.

The group had an amazing surprise during the lunch hour. David Therkelsen, at St. Thomas for a different workshop, spotted signs leading to the LMHRC meeting and stopped by. What was his interest in our group? He was one of the founders of the League back in the 1970s! He was pleased to find that the League still exists and gave words of encouragement.

## League Issues Essay Awards

Middle school students from eleven cities entered the annual League Human Rights essay contest this school year. The topic for 2006 was "Describe how

you see these behaviors in your daily life and how they are related to each other: Stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination. At the award ceremony first prize went to Elissa Rothman, 7<sup>th</sup> grade student at Roseville Area Middle School. Second prize was awarded to Megan Sanders, 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Plymouth Middle School. Meghna Sohani, 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Central Middle School won 3<sup>rd</sup> place for the New Hope Human Rights Commission.

Honorable mention awards: Gema Alvarado and Marni Surdy from Austin, Caleb Bakker from Marshall, Ashley Chelmo, Cottage Grove; Allie Chinander, Shoreview; Taylor Haag, Paynesville and Courtney Hobson, Red Wing.

Students read their essays and received awards at the Brooklyn Park City Hall with parents, teachers and Human Rights Commissioners in attendance. This is the eighth year the League has sponsored a human rights essay contest.

Commissioners are invited to submit ideas for next year's topic. Please send your ideas to Marion Helland at [marionhelland@comcast.net](mailto:marionhelland@comcast.net) or mail to 7720 Winnetka Hts. Dr., Golden Valley, MN 55427.

"Ignore Your Rights and  
They'll Go Away."  
Sonia Nieto

**“HUDDLED MASSES, HARD CHOICES:  
The Human Rights Challenge of Immigration”**

**League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

**Co-Sponsored by**

**University of Minnesota Human Rights Center**

Saturday, September 30, 2006

University of Minnesota Human Rights Center

Walter Mondale Hall

**229-19<sup>th</sup> Avenue South**

**Minneapolis, MN**

*Proposed  
Agenda*

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 8:30–9:00   | Registration, continental breakfast   |
| 9:00-9:30   | Business meeting  |
| 9:30–9:40   | Welcome - League President, <b>Larry Clark</b>  |
| 9:40-10:10  | Welcoming Message from <b>Velma Korbel</b> , MN Human Rights Commissioner   |
| 10:10-10:15 | Break   |
| 10:15-11:15 | <b>Keynote Speakers, Governor Tim Pawlenty and State Senator John Marty</b><br>(Invited)<br><b><u>Plenary Sessions</u></b>                |
| 11:15-12:30 | Response Panel: <b>Police Sgt. Tom Lorenz</b> , Hopkins, Mayors to be invited,<br><b>Larry Clark</b> , Moderator                          |
| 12:30-1:30  | Lunch   |
| 12:45-1:30  | <b>Katherine Fennelly</b> , Professor of Public Affairs, H. Humphrey Institute<br>Bridging Cultures: Language, Identity, Customs          |
| 1:30–2:15   | <b>Michele Garnett McKenzie</b> , Director Refugee and Immigrant Program, MN<br>Advocates for Human Rights                                |
| 2:15-2:30   | Break   |
| 2:30 – 3:15 | “ <i>This is My Home</i> ” Lesson sample: How does human migration relate to<br>human rights?, <b>Marion Helland</b> , LMHRC Board member |
| 3:15 - 4:00 | Commission Idea Exchange, <b>Local HRCs</b> Respond to Immigration Issues   |

CEU and CLU accreditation pending

# 35<sup>th</sup> Annual LMHRC Conference Registration

The 2006 annual conference will be held in the Human Rights Center at the University of Minnesota, Walter Mondale Law Center, 229 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN.

Registration fee\*: \$60.00 (\$70.00 after September 9, 2006)

**Special registration fee of only \$50 per person for Commissions that register three or more members and/or city staff personnel before September 15, 2006.**

For more information contact Marion Helland (763) 546-7469,  
[marionhelland@comcast.net](mailto:marionhelland@comcast.net)

\*Fee includes continental breakfast and lunch

At the 2006 annual conference there will be space available for local HRC's to display information about the work of their commission. We invite every Commission to participate, no matter how large or how small the projects with which you have been involved. Your display can be as elaborate or as simple as you wish.

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Make checks payable to LMHRC. Mail form and registration fee to LMHRC; c/o Jane McPartland, 1820 10th Ave. S #8, St. Cloud, MN 56301

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

City Organization/ Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Special Accommodations Needed \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in bringing a display to the conference.

I would like information about serving on the League Board of Directors

## Spotlight on Commissions

### **The League links human rights commissions in Minnesota**

#### **Chaska**

About six months ago, Leo Parvis suggested to the Chaska High School to organize their diversity and human rights initiatives they needed to implement a diversity council. The idea was welcomed by the principal and other leaders in CHS and Leo immediately put a proposal together and formed a taskforce of 5 people. Within a month 15 people including parents, community leaders and high school teachers were selected. The Chaska High School Diversity Council was officially launched in January, 2006 and has been working well since. The Council has four committees (Education, Celebrations, Advocacy, and Fundraising) chaired by council members. Leo is the Diversity Council chair. Recently over 300 students participated in a YWCA dialogue on race at the school. Three HR Commissioners helped facilitate. Plans are to facilitate a faculty and community dialogue.

The high school also has a Diversity Club, a Spanish Club and an Asian Cultures Club. Leo recommends that all school districts in Minnesota form a diversity council.

The Chaska Human Rights Commission is sponsoring a Pow Wow for a celebration the last full weekend in July. Donations of \$3000 have been received.

The HRC is planning involvement with a county Senior Commission with the goal of making the county senior friendly.

#### **Grand Rapids**

The Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission and Legal Aid of North East Minnesota will host a workshop on housing issues as they relate to human rights. This free program is scheduled for Thursday,

June 22, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at MacRostie Art Center in downtown Grand Rapids. The program will be held in conjunction with the Portraits of Home photography exhibit from the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund that highlights poverty housing in rural Minnesota. Landlords, housing officials from the city and county, Housing and Redevelopment Authority Commissioners, city and county elected officials, tenants, law enforcement personnel, students and the public are expected to attend.

The Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission has co-sponsored two recent programs with the public library, KAXE radio, the Blandin Foundation and other community groups. Presentations were by Lois Jensen, who is the subject of the book *Class Action* and the film *North Country*, and by Fred Friedman, chief public defender of Minnesota's sixth district, who spoke on "Wealth and Unequal Justice."

Members of the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission attended a Racial Profiling workshop with Myron Orfield, U of M law professor, at the Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake. This workshop outlined the work of the Institute on Race and Poverty and the racial profiling study in Minnesota.

#### **Plymouth**

"The Media: The Good/The Bad" was the focus of the annual workshop planned by student members of the Human Rights Commission. The HRC has created a presentation "Human Rights for All!"

This year two bias crimes and a bias incident were reported. Responses planned by the Commission included sending letters to the two victims.

**Send Commission news to  
marionhelland@comcast.net**

**League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions  
4100 Lakeview Avenue North  
Robbinsdale, MN 55422**

### **A letter from the Vice-President**

**Evelyn Staus**

This has been a whirlwind year in human rights for me. I was appointed to the Brooklyn Park Human Relations Commission in August, elected to the Board of Directors of the League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions in September, and elected Vice-President of the Board in October! I am now heavily involved in planning for the 2006 state conference, which is my main responsibility on the Board.

I am grateful to all those who have volunteered to help with conference planning, but especially to Thelma McKenzie and Marion Helland, for doing so much of the “heavy lifting.”

I have always been a social justice sort of person, but a trip to Kenya in 1991 opened my eyes to a reality of which I was not aware. I made wonderful friends, was able to return to Kenya 5 times over the next several years, and had my world view utterly shaken and rearranged.

Now I have just returned from my first visit to China. Having friends in various parts of the world and friends of various ethnicities in my own backyard helps me see the world with less Euro-centric bias. We are all so much more alike than we are different. We have similar aspirations, similar heartaches, similar joys and fears.

It is a privilege to serve in LMHRC. I am looking forward to the conference in September, which will focus on issues related to immigration. We hope to meet Commissioners from throughout the state at the University of Minnesota venue.