

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

Joseph Bush, Chair

*Cynthia Brown, Human Relations Liaison
Department of Human Services*



Francis Jack Russell, President
Kenneth R. Dement, Commissioner
Lawrence D. Jarboe, Commissioner
Thomas A. Mattingly, Sr., Commissioner
Daniel H. Raley, Commissioner

**St. Mary's County
Human Relations Commission**

ANNUAL REPORT

I) Purpose

Since 1963, the St. Mary's County Human Relations Commission (SMCHRC) has been empowered to promote understanding and harmony of relationships between the people of the county and to use its influence and persuasion to direct the community's efforts to the solution of problems that cause racial and other tensions stemming from acts of discrimination within the county.

II) Significant Activities

- A) The HRC co-sponsored the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Prayer Breakfast held at St. Mary's College of Maryland by attending planning meetings and assisting with PR. One member, also, served as the Co-MC for the event.
- B) Support of the Study Circles initiative focusing on local race relations continued with several HRC members volunteering to attend facilitator training sessions. These members later served as facilitators for various Study Circle discussion groups throughout the county. Study Circles is a nationally recognized program that provides a format for discussion of ideas and/or concerns along with an opportunity to brainstorm possible solutions.
- C) Bonnie Hernandez, Senior Investigator for the Southern Maryland Field Office for the Maryland Commission on Human Relations made a presentation to the membership on activities within her jurisdiction (St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles and Southern Prince George County). The purpose of the presentation was to discuss ways the St. Mary's HRC could support and work with the State Field Office.
- D) The HRC membership initiated discussion with St. Mary's County Library staff on ways to support community outreach efforts through collaboration. Kathleen Reif, Director, and Janis Coker, Youth Coordinator, was invited to make a presentation and discuss opportunities.

- E) The HRC supported the Big Read program, which is a nationally recognized program aimed at increasing book readership and discussion groups throughout communities. The local effort was lead by St. Mary's County Library. HRC members helped promote the project and served as group discussion leaders at different locations.
- F) The HRC hosted their annual Awards Breakfast honoring local citizens for their efforts in the field of human relations and service. Two adults (Steve Hawkins and Glynnis Schmidt) and two high school students (Christina Dawson and Stevie-Mari Hawkins) were honored. The guest speaker for the 2008 event was Zerbin Singleton, an honors student at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, who overcame significant personal obstacles to achieve academic and athletic success.

II) Problem/Challenges

The challenge continues for the membership to find creative ways to accomplish their goal of advocating for human/civil rights and cultural diversity. Also, the group decided it needs to increase it's visibility within the community so more people become aware of what they do and, hopefully, membership would increase.

III) Plans for the Upcoming Year

- A) Plans are underway to host a Human Relations Forum inviting the chairperson from numerous organizations in the county to discuss their missions, activities, obstacles and opportunities to collaborate.
- B) The HRC plans to be more visible by representing a variety of ethnicities and/or specific groups during national designation months (i.e. Native American History Month, etc...) by requesting time at the County Commissioner's meeting for proclamations. This is an opportunity for increased cultural awareness.

IV) Membership as of June 2009

Joseph Bush--Chair
James Hanley--Vice Chair
Theo Cramer
Kimberly Beachy
Craig Buist
Robert Cryer
Leisha Wood