

Community Relations Commission City of Goshen, Indiana Annual Report – 2019

Submitted by Evan Miller, CRC Chair

Mission

The CRC serves Goshen by developing programs and policies that aim for a city without racism or discrimination of any kind, and build capacity for creative problem solving, resiliency, understanding, and compassion among the diverse people in our community.

Principals

- Honor the dignity of each person and each person's rights
- Listen to the diverse voices of the community
- Constructive communication and engagement
- Honesty, truthfulness, and integrity
- Promote a community that is safe for all
- Acknowledge and accept the challenge of change—that it may have both positive and negative consequences
- Promote the acceptance of differences
- Promote equality and freedom from discrimination

Origin and Background

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) was created by Ordinance 4201, "An Ordinance Creating the Goshen Community Relations Commission and Prescribing the Powers and Duties of the Commission," adopted by the Common Council on April 13, 2004. Goshen was the 23rd Indiana city to establish a human/community relations commission. Mayor Allan Kauffman convened the first meeting on August 17, 2004.

CRC Commissioners during 2019

Evan Miller, Chair

Michele Fanfair-Steury, Vice Chair

David Araujo, Secretary (resigned November)

Glenn Null, Treasurer

Simon Hertzler-Gascho (Youth Advisor)

Don Brown

Cathy Cripe (Began November)
Judith Davis
AJ Delgadillo
Yolo Lopez DeMarco (Began June)
Sreekala Rajagopalan
Jose Rocha (Resigned May)
Julia King was City Council Liaison (non-voting)
Darin Short served as consultant and free-lance staff support (non-voting)

CRC Activity in 2019

The CRC was very active and productive in 2019. Regrouping from a substantial turnover in leadership and membership in 2018, the commission worked on a number of projects and successfully engaged with the community to accomplish our mission.

Community Conversations

The commission partnered with Goshen Community Schools to host a series of four community conversations to foster cross-cultural engagement and understanding. The events were:

- **Growing Goshen Together** (April 25, 2019) This was a pilot conversation designed to bring diverse groups together to explore how Goshen is successful in embracing diversity, and where it has opportunities for growth. This pilot meeting was considered very successful, and on the strength of that success we designed three more events for the fall.
- **A culture that learns: Our schools and community together** (September 26, 2019) This conversation offered the opportunity to learn from the community's schools, which are home to embodied diversity in Goshen, lived out in practice every day. The conversation focused on what is going well in our schools and where growth is needed. How can our schools better serve the families in Goshen, and what is their role in the larger community?
- **How Goshen grows: Balancing power and raising up leaders** (October 24, 2019) This conversation addressed leadership and power in the Goshen community. Participants had the opportunity to speak into successful balances of power and how that is created, as well as look at challenges to equalized power. How does one access power and how does the community grow capacity and leadership to provide opportunities for shared power?
- **Who is Goshen: Telling our stories** (November 14, 2019) This conversation provided space to get to know others in the community by listening and sharing about identity and the experiences that shape each person. How have our

experiences shaped our values? Bridging divides requires knowing one another—can we learn to know each other and move from strangers to friends?

All of these events shared some key characteristics:

- They were designed and executed by a collaborative team consisting of members of the CRC and Goshen Community Schools. The committee enjoyed tremendous support, and Goshen Community Schools deserves credit for their significant investment in time, energy and resources.
- All events were facilitated by Jes Stoltzfus Buller, a local expert on peacebuilding and community organization, and used the World Café model, a method for dialogue that helps groups have healthy conversations around issues that matter. In World Cafe, groups of four sit around small tables in an environment modeled after a café and each can share with the group their perspective about a given question. The process includes three or four rounds, between which people shuffle around to different tables, allowing each conversation to happen with a new group of people and a new question.
- We formed action committees from each of these events to take the ideas that were generated and put them into action. These followup efforts met with varying degrees of success, and were significantly hampered by the pandemic of 2020.

Bystander Training Bystander Training

Hosted for CRC members, City Council members, the Mayor, and key city staff on November 21, 2019, this pilot program provided specific hands-on training on how to engage in a positive and helpful way if you witness events that may be discriminatory. This two-hour workshop provided opportunities to role-play a variety of situations and gave participants helpful tools and techniques for addressing uncomfortable situations. We used an outside facilitator (Nicole Bauman) to lead this workshop.

Middle School Language Arts Class engagement

Middle School Language Arts teacher Christa Kauffman invited the CRC to participate with her in receiving, reviewing, and responding to student research projects around diversity and discrimination. A subcommittee of the CRC met with the students and had their eyes opened about the experience of youth in our community. Ms Kauffman reported that the students appreciated being listened to by a community organization.

Taste of Goshen

The CRC hosted Taste of Goshen, an ethnic food court during Goshen's First Friday gathering in May. It was once again a sell-out event, but concerns about food safety made it unlikely that we'll participate in this event in the future.

Letter to Goshen Community Schools

The commission became aware of a situation in Goshen High School where a student was called a racial slur. We discovered that the school corporation did not have a policy prohibiting these words. We made a formal request that the school system address this, and they have modified their student handbook to specifically address racially-charged language.

Updated Mission and Principals statements

We updated our mission statement to articulate **what** we do, **who** we do it for, and **why** we do it. We updated our principals to more adequately reflect our commitment to each other and the community. The updated statements are at the top of this report.

Guest Speakers

We began hosting community leaders to ask how they are addressing racism and discrimination in their work. Visitors included:

- Lori Harrington, Bashor Home Teen Court
- Steve Hope and staff, Goshen Community Schools

Staffing

At the end of 2019 we let our long-standing contract with Darin Short expire without renewal, and we set the stage for creating a new position within city staff and reporting to the Mayor to provide oversight and guidance to the CRC.

Youth Advisor

We created a new position on the commission for a Youth Advisor. The Mayor appointed Simon Hertzler-Gascho to this non-voting role in the fall. Simon was the runner-up candidate from the spring 2019 student election for City Counsel Youth Advisor. He was an effective and engaged addition to the commission.