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## Commission Holds February Monthly Meeting in Allentown

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) held its monthly February meeting in Allentown. The Commission takes the opportunity to meet in other areas across the Commonwealth to make people aware of the services the PHRC offers and to provide outreach and listen to

concerns of individuals in the region. One area of concern voiced by Allentown residents at the meeting was related to issues regarding disparate treatment of minority students in schools. The PHRC plans to partner with parents and school administrators in Allentown.

The Education and Outreach Division of the PHRC, hopes to create a dialogue that will address concerns and create a positive learning environment for all students.

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## Advisory Council News

The PHRC is continuing to work with nine established Advisory Councils (AC) who serve as the PHRC's "eyes and ears" in the community in regard to discrimination of all types and education equity in all our school districts.

So, what is happening with the individual councils?

- The Montgomery County AC is carrying out a minority mentoring program and is in the process of forming an educational subcommittee with partners from the Abington Human Relations Commission and the Pottstown YWCA.
  - The Lebanon Lancaster Berks AC received training from PHRC Hearing Examiner, Carl Summerson at their March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting on the advisory council's roles and responsibilities.
  - Centre County AC developed an Op-ed piece to submit to the local newspapers. They also are in the process of working with the public broadcasting station in their area to work to develop an educational program or article for their website on discrimination.
  - Monroe, Cambria and Blair County ACs are currently planning their for spring meetings.
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## Advisory Council continued

- York County AC has concerns about truancy issues in the York schools. They held a session on March 23 where the program director of the United Way of York County’s Truancy program discussed available resources in the community for parents to help address ways to combat truancy.
- Cumberland, Dauphin Perry AC is forming committees to work on two focus areas, education and employment discrimination and hope to form additional subcommittees to operate in each county.
- SWPA AC (Allegheny, Westmoreland and Washington) is still forming, but plan to focus on education and community supports. Dr. Epryl King a local educator and founder of a non-profit aimed at achievement gaps, has just joined the advisory council.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining an existing advisory council in your county, contact Geoff Biringner at the PHRC at [gbiringner@pa.gov](mailto:gbiringner@pa.gov)

### Meetings for Advisory Councils

<p>Blair County Johnstown SD Admin. Bldg. 1091 Broad St, Johnstown Third Monday of every other month</p>	<p>Monroe County Loder Bldg. 62 Analomink St. East Stroudsburg Spring meetings to be determined</p>
<p>Cambria County Kings Restaurant 3000 6<sup>th</sup> Ave., Altoona Last Tuesday of each mo. (not dates yet)</p>	<p>Montgomery County Montgomery County Community College 340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell Third Thursday of each mo. Next meeting April 24 at 10:00AM</p>
<p>Centre County State College Borough Bldg. S. Allen St., State College Second Tuesday each month 7:30PM Next meeting April 11</p>	<p>SouthWestPA (Allegheny, Westmoreland and Washington Co) for information contact Jelani Cooper at 717-783-8499</p>
<p>Cumberland/Dauphin/Perry Co. 333 Market St., Harrisburg Second Tuesday each mo. 3:30PM Next meeting April 11</p>	<p>York County Crispus Attucks Center 605 S. Duke St., York Third Wednesday of the month Next meeting April 20 at 5:00PM</p>
<p>Lebanon/Lancaster/Berks HACC Lebanon Campus 735 Cumberland St. Lebanon Meet every other month Next meeting May 20 at 2:00 PM</p>	

*The PHRC promotes equal opportunity for all and enforces Pennsylvania’s civil rights laws that protect people from unlawful discrimination. It is our vision that all people in Pennsylvania are able to live, work and learn free from unlawful discrimination.*

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## Mediation Program Needs Volunteers



As you may know, the PHRC Mediation program was created as an alternative to resolving disputes and establishing an acceptable outcome for both parties without lengthy investigations, going through the PHRC hearing process or the courts.

As the program continues to grow, **there is an increased need for mediation trained attorneys to volunteer to assist the program in mediating cases.**

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming part of the Mediation Program, contact Katherine Petruczok at [kpetruczok@pa.gov](mailto:kpetruczok@pa.gov)  
Or call 717-787-9537.

Note: At this time, the Mediation Program has successfully mediated 42 cases which resulted in saving the Commission \$210,000 (as a result and avoiding the investigation of the case).

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## HRC Summit Planned for July 2016

Last June, 2015, the PHRC held its first annual HRC Summit. The Commission has been working to strengthen partnerships with local HRCs.

The PHRC is in the process of establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with HRCs to increase knowledge and understanding as well as expedited processing of complaints that have been referred locally.

At this year's Summit, we plan to build upon the first one and continue to foster the opportunity for participants to share information, put a name with a face and network with others.

If you have a suggestion for a session topic, please contact John Clark at [jclark@pa.gov](mailto:jclark@pa.gov)

Stay tuned for announcement of a date in July 2016. We hope to see you there!



Photo from last year's HRC Summit;  
L-R, Jim Kayer, JoAnn Edwards,  
Commissioner Yiengst and Pinkey Lucas

## PHRC Outreach and Activities

The PHRC staff has been busy reaching out to communities with training and education. Here are some highlights:

- Geoff Biringer participated in diversity training sponsored by the Harrisburg YWCA.
- Tameka Hatcher, Geoff Biringer, and Captain Wendell Morris along with the PA State Police provided diversity training to the Capitol Police.
- Pittsburgh Regional Office participated in Rep. Dan Miller's Disability and Mental Health Summit.
- Jelani Cooper and Devin Price served on a panel for an event at John Harris High School in Harrisburg in which seniors provided oral presentations on social issues.
- JoAnn Edwards met with the Mayor of Harrisburg to provide information about a program initiated by the Mayor of Birmingham, AL that creates community involvement to address pressing civil rights issues.
- Sheldon Murray and Devin Price participated in the 500 Men Reading Event in Harrisburg. Sheldon read to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Downey School. Devin read to students at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School.

## Coming soon... Book Facilitator on Housing Discrimination

The PHRC will be initiating a pilot program with children aimed at increasing housing discrimination awareness. A part time book facilitator will be visiting public and school libraries to read the book "The Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House", developed by the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center to children from grades 1 through 5.

The book is about a group children who discover that a landlord has discriminated against some people seeking housing in their neighborhood and what they do to keep their community open to all people seeking housing. Questions and discussion will take place after the reading is finished.

Plans include presenting a copy of the book to each library and sending information home for parents on fair housing.

Advisory Councils will also be trained to take carry out the program in their area,

For more information, contact Geoff Biringer at [gbiringer@pa.gov](mailto:gbiringer@pa.gov)

## 2014-15 PHRC Annual Report

The PHRC 2014-15 Annual Report is now available. Learn about the accomplishments of the PHRC during this fiscal year. You can access a copy by visiting the PHRC website at [www.phrc.pa.gov](http://www.phrc.pa.gov) and click on the Publications tab in the banner of the homepage.

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## PHRC Outreach and Activities continued



PHRC held February Commission meeting in Allentown. Members of community attended.



JoAnn Edwards and Dr. Joan Duvall Flynn, President of PA State Conference, NAACP attended Martin Luther King Prayer Breakfast



Heather Roth and Carl Summerson attended and spoke at York Human Relations Commission's Diversity Luncheon

## PHRC Outreach and Activities continued



JoAnn Edwards spoke at Black History Month Ceremony held at the Commonwealth Keystone Building



Geoff Biringer and others participated in Harrisburg YWCA diversity training



Sheldon Murray participated in 500 Men Reading Day in Harrisburg School District