

Civil Rights PA PHRC News

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Message from Interim Chair

Greetings Everyone,

It has been a very active Spring 2016. In April, I was appointed by Governor Tom Wolf as Interim Chair to the PHRC. I have served on the Commission since 1999 and am committed to carrying out the mission of the agency.

As some of you may know, due to last year's budget impasse, the PHRC was unable to hire staff to fill vacancies throughout the regions. In fact, the Senate State Government Committee held a public hearing relating to concerns about the operations of the PHRC on June 7. You can view JoAnn Edwards, Executive Director and my testimony on the committee's [website](#).

Additionally, Sen. Anthony Williams held a press conference on June 22 to urge the legislature to increase the PHRC's FY2016-17 budget. We are hopeful that our visits to legislators have promoted a better understanding of the needs of the organization and our role in promoting and protecting the civil rights of all Pennsylvanians. Thank you to Sen. Williams and to those legislators that support the PHRC (see page 4).

Also, Michael Hardiman, past Chief Counsel for the PHRC, now retired has been appointed to the Commission. Michael joined the Commission in May and will be a welcomed addition.

I look forward to working with Michael, the other commissioners, JoAnn Edwards, and staff throughout the coming year to address the operations of the agency.

Thank you for your ongoing support,

M. Joel Bolstein, Interim Chair



Advisory Council News

The PHRC is continuing to work with nine 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. Efforts are now underway to establish a 10th AC in the Lehigh Valley. Here is what's happening with each AC.

- Montgomery County AC held a series of town hall meetings throughout Montgomery County to provide information on the AC and the PHRC. The AC plans to continue town hall meetings throughout the fall.
- Lebanon Lancaster Berks (LLB) AC at its last meeting planned to ask a local NAACP chapter to provide a presentation at a future meeting. LLB will be meeting on July 14.
- Centre County AC is working with a public broadcasting station to develop an educational program that will be air on the station's website. They are also holding a picnic in August for new/prospective members.

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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Meetings for Advisory Councils

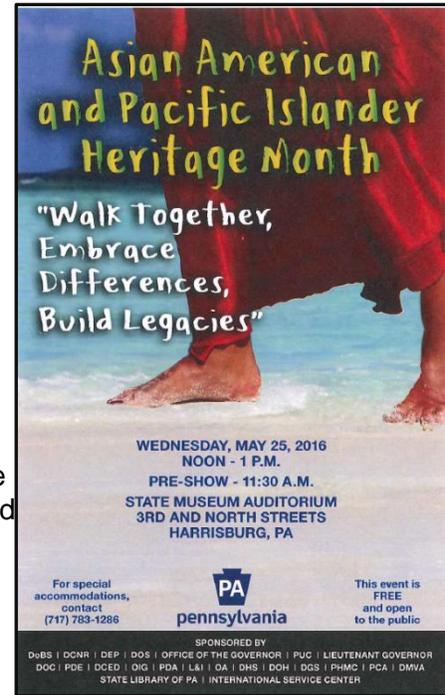
Blair County Johnstown SD Admin. Bldg. 1091 Broad St, Johnstown Third Monday of every other month No Summer meetings	Monroe County Loder Bldg. 62 Analomink St. East Stroudsburg No Summer meetings
Johnstown (Cambria County) Kings Restaurant 3000 6 th Ave., Altoona Last Tuesday of each month No Summer meetings	Montgomery County Montgomery County Community College 340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell Third Thursday of each month No Summer meetings
Centre County State College Borough Bldg. S. Allen St., State College Second Tuesday each month Next meeting July 12 at 7:30PM	SouthWestPA (Allegheny, Westmoreland and Washington Co) For information contact Jelani Cooper at 717-783-8499 Third Wednesday of each month No Summer meetings scheduled
Cumberland/Dauphin/Perry Co. 333 Market St., Harrisburg Second Tuesday of each month Next meeting July 12 at 3:30PM	York County Crispus Attucks Center 605 S. Duke St., York Third Wednesday of the month No Summer meetings
Lebanon/Lancaster/Berks HACC Lebanon Campus 735 Cumberland St. Lebanon Meet every other month Next meeting July 15 at 2:00 PM	Lehigh Valley in the formative stages

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration

On Wednesday May 25, Executive Director JoAnn Edwards attended the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration. The event was held in the State Museum Auditorium and featured a long list of musical performers, dancers and keynote speakers. In attendance was the Gov. Wolf's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.

Highlights of the event included a performance by renowned harpist Tomoko Sugawara, who played an ancient harp called a "kugo", invented in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago. The keynote speakers were Hirotohi "Hiro" Nishikawa and Zehra Wamiq. Both speakers touched on the challenges Asian Americans face as a group and the activism that is providing a solution. Hiro is of Japanese ancestry and was an occupant of the Poston Arizona concentration camp during WWII when Japanese Americans were interned.

After the program JoAnn met with the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs at the PHRC office.



HRC Summit Planned for July 26

SUMMIT

HRC

PA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION 2ND ANNUAL

TUESDAY, JULY 26 9:00 AM TO 4:15 PM

333 MARKET STREET HARRISBURG, PA HERITAGE ROOM, LOBBY LEVEL

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

**MEDIATION PROGRAM
LHRC ORDINANCES
LGBT RIGHTS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE SESSIONS**

To RSVP Email: RA-HRPHRC-RSVP@pa.gov

pennsylvania
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

717.787.4410
www.phrc.pa.gov

The Second Annual HRC Summit is now officially scheduled for July 26. The morning sessions will begin with a presentation on the Mediation Program and its related benefits. The afternoon sessions will be divided into three breakout sessions. First, attendees will look at the interpretation of section 12B of the PHRA and how the PHRC can assist in improving LHRCs with their ordinances. The second session will be on the rules and dynamics related to the LGBT community. The third and final session is intended for Advisory Council members and includes a discussion on ethnic intimidation, harassment and outreach. Funding for the HRC Summit is provided by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

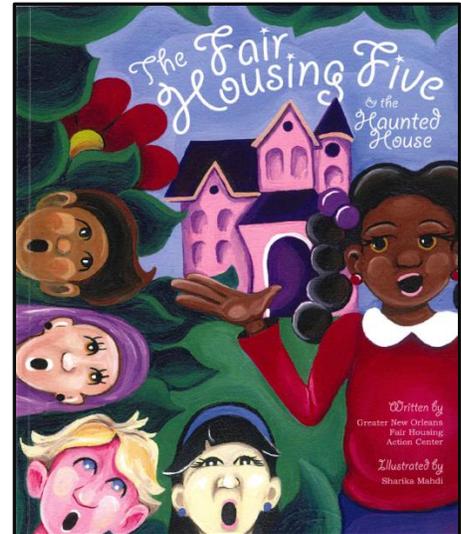
Fair Housing Book Initiative Launched

With the goal of creating awareness and an understanding of fair housing rights and discrimination, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission has received a federal Housing and Urban Development grant to fund the Fair Housing Book Initiative.

Through the grant, the PHRC is providing book readings of the “The Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House” to children’s groups at libraries, elementary schools, day care programs and other community organizations to help promote a better understanding about housing discrimination. Local Advisory Councils are also participating.

As part of the reading, a discussion is held with the children about housing discrimination and they are encouraged to talk with their parents or guardian on the issue. Feedback postcards are handed out to determine what the children took away from the discussion and what they’re telling their parents.

PHRC is excited about this program and encourages you to host a book reading with children’s groups in your area. For information, contact Tameka Hatcher at thatcher@pa.gov. The program ends in December.



Sen. Williams Holds Press Conference to Support PHRC

On June 22, Senator Anthony Williams who serves as Minority Chair for the Senate State Government Committee, held a [press conference](#) at the Capitol to urge the legislature to provide an additional \$2 million for the PHRC. Senators Jay Costa, Vincent Hughes, Christine Tartaglione as well as former PHRC Executive Director Homer Floyd also joined Senator Williams in supporting the PHRC’s need to secure additional funding. The PHRC thanks Senators Williams, Costa, Hughes and Tartaglione for their support of the agency.



PHRC Executive Director JoAnn Edwards speaking at Sen. Williams’ press conference calling for more legislators to support the agency.

PHRC Mediation Program

The PHRC Mediation Program continues to be an option for case resolution. In May 2016, a total of 82 cases were referred to the program from the regional offices bringing the total number of referrals for the state fiscal year 2015-16 to 652 as of the end of May. The program has successfully mediated 51 cases thereby avoiding \$255,000 in investigation costs.



Our Agency is Looking for Mediators

The Mediation Program still needs volunteer trained mediators to help the PHRC mediate cases. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a volunteer mediator, please contact Katherine Petruczok, Mediation Coordinator at 717-787-9537 or kpetruczok@pa.gov

Advisory Council News continued

- Cambria and Blair County AC held spring meetings and will not be meeting over the summer. Blair County AC discussed holding a conference on police and community relations centered on student relationships at the University of Pittsburgh campus in Johnstown. The Blair County AC also plans to work with students to address housing issues in the county.
- Cumberland Dauphin and Perry AC discussed hiring issues surrounding ex-offenders and ways to help get them back into the workforce; the AC would like to address anti-bullying training in the local area schools. No summer meetings.
- SWPA AC has formed committees and elected officers in April. Leslie Walker, Chair; Carmen Brown, Vice Chair and Epryl King, Secretary.
- York AC is focused on education in their county and would like to work with schools to implement the DOJ SPIRIT program in several of them within the year. Affordable housing for low-income individuals and families is an issue for the area. Officers elected in April. Judy Ritter Dickson, Chair; Mabusha Cooper, Vice Chair and Marakay Rogers, Secretary. No summer meetings.
- Lehigh County AC – held first formative meeting on June 30.

DID YOU KNOW?

The PHRC has [videos](#) on our website that provide a brief, five minute overview on the types of discrimination – and they are also available in Spanish! Take a look and find out more....

PHRC Outreach and Activities

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

- Spring activities of the Education and Outreach Division include: On May 11, Tameka Hatcher participated in a panel discussion on Building Bridges in Police/Community Relations sponsored by the Tri-State Human Relations Commission
- Tameka Hatcher participated in a public forum sponsored by the PA Legislative Black Caucus relating to ways to create honest and open dialogue between community and police.
- Christina Reese attended an award ceremony sponsored by the East Norriton Township Human Relation Commission for 4th graders from Paul Fry Elementary School. Students learned about civil rights and being a good citizen. Students wrote essays, created posters and videos on what they learned. County Commissioners, a local judge, parents and grandparents attended the award ceremony for the students.
- Jelani Cooper joined Suzanne Buchannan, Conciliation Specialist for Community Relations Services of the U.S. Department of Justice in early May to introduce the S.P.I.R.I.T program at George Washington High School in Philadelphia.
- Tameka Hatcher and Justin Walker have started to conduct book readings of the Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House in the Harrisburg area.
- Jelani Cooper and staff from the Pittsburgh Regional office provided diversity training at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown Campus on May 2.
- Pittsburgh Regional Office participated in providing awareness at a fundraising event for the Thomas Enzerra Autism Project in April. The project supported the project and autism support classrooms.



PHRC partnered with the East Norriton HRC to recognize the fourth grade students of Paul Fry Elementary school in in Montgomery County for the completion of a Civil Rights and citizenship program.

PHRC Staff participated in the Thomas Enzerra Autism Project Dodgeball Tournament at Trinity High School in Pittsburgh.

