

Call to Eliminate Racism

Vision: Rockford is a Community Where Everyone Feels Valued

Mission: Eliminate Racism in Rockford

Quarterly Reports: September 10, 2019

Eliminate Racism 815/Criminal Justice Action Team

The whole Criminal Justice meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm at Montague Branch Library.

Update from Goal #1: The City of Rockford will create a racially diverse Civilian Review Board by 2021 made up of non-police members to provide input related to investigations resulting from police action. Steve DeLap reported that several cities of comparable population, demographics and police size have been found who are instituting or have been using a form of civilian oversight. Members of his group are in contact with Grand Rapids, Michigan, Akron, Ohio. Preparing our case to take to the Mayor will require a firm foundation research and interviews. It is slow, but at last we feel we have some traction. Meetings with former police officers are pending.

Update from Goal #2: To reduce by 20%, racial disparities in stops by the Rockford Police between African Americans, Latinos and White people by 2021. Wendy Bennett has enlisted Maurice West as an ally in the effort to have a traffic stop amnesty program. West asked for a fact sheet, which was provided, on a statewide basis. Several organizations and people in Chicago are working on this cause, as 80% of the workforce in Illinois drives to work. The Sun Times recently published an article saying that suspension of licenses for traffic tickets must stop. Many unions are in on this, with the ACLU, Heartland Alliance, and other organizations. Gaen and Wanda visited the school district to find out what "every student, as room permits" actually means in regard to kids who are permitted to take driver's ed. Apparently it does not apply to everyone; this is important because students who have had the course have lower insurance rates and can get their licenses sooner. The way it breaks out appears to have a racial/socio-economic component.

Goal #3: The Winnebago County Court system will create and implement a Restorative Justice and Education/Counseling Program for low-level offenders to help them become productive citizens of the Rockford area by 2021. Carolyn reported her visit to the Cook County Courthouse at which she witnessed the circle process in which the victim of a crime, the perpetrator and other involved persons gather to discuss the various effects of the crime. On a larger scale, it seems that we are moving from punishment to a restorative justice model. San Francisco has just closed its juvenile detention jail because people are waking up to the damage this does. There is more research to be done before requesting meetings with local judges. This will be slow and steady. Others are also working in this area.

We continue to make alliances across many organizations and individuals in Rockford. We are aware of the many people, some of whom have worked for decades with children, with officials, with police officers to make this a better community. We are grateful for work upon which we can build, and we hope that others will build upon what we have learned and done. This endeavor won't go away, and it reminds me of a line from a Clint Eastwood movie: "There ain't no end to doin' good!"

The Eliminate Racism 815 Economic Opportunities Action Team

This Team meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Rundall home, 413 Stiles Parkway at 6:00 pm. The team has one primary goal:

Goal#1: To facilitate the creation of a Southwest River Development Coalition to promote the recreational, entertainment, and small business use of the Rock River in Southwest Rockford by January 1, 2020.

The team has identified the following potential partner organization and possible members of the coalition:

- City of Rockford Development Department
- Rockford Area Development corporation
- Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Rockford Park District
- Southwest Business Association
- SWIFFT

They are preparing to meet with these organizations.

The team has a small number of members and is currently working on recruiting more members. When more members join the team, there are three more potential goals which could have sub-teams:

- Promoting grocery delivery through InstaCart in the Southwest area of Rockford.

- Promoting the location of a Salvation Army or Goodwill store in the Southwest area of Rockford.
- Promoting the expansion of the two-lane part of North Springfield Avenue to four lane to facilitate commercial transportation on the Westside of Rockford.

The Economic Opportunities Action Team meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 at 413 Stiles Parkway. If you would like to join the team, come to the next meeting.

Education Action Team

The Education Team meets the 1st Thursday of the month at 4:30 pm at Pilgrim Baptist Church.

Introduction:

The Education Team's main focus during the last quarter was preparation for the Mayor and Supt Breakfast. There were approximately 140 people who attended. Both the Mayor and the Supt presented data related to racial disparities in their work force. Then each table responded to questions led by Eliminate Racism Facilitators and ideas/suggestions were generated. The Mayor and the Supt have suggested a follow up Town Hall Style meeting. We will be making plans during the following months.

The suggestions/ideas generated at the breakfast are available in a separate document entitled: ERED Mayor Supt Breakfast Ideas Organized into themes and can be found on the Website.

We are also in search of community groups to which we will present our findings and recommendations.

Goal #1: To increase to 20% People of Color - especially African-American and Hispanic-- in all levels of RPS205: administration, faculty, staff, and board members by the 2020-2021 school year. By the 2025-2026 school year, have percentages of African-American and Hispanic administration, staff, and board members match the percentage of African-American and Hispanic students within the system. We continue to work with Matt Zediker related to collecting Human Resource Data so we can compare last year's data to the 2019-2020 School year. He will share data with us sometime in October. We had a discussion related to retention of staff members connected to the district's Mentoring Program. The National Equity Project is expanding its role into more schools. The Goal 1 Team will continue to monitor the district's recruitment schedule.

Goal #2: To ensure that RPS205 policies and resources – teachers, counselors, supplies, technology, etc – are distributed equitably, based on the needs of students in the school and measured by the state required assessment data and the district discipline data. This goal shall be met by the 2020-2021 school year. The New Discipline Code for 2019-2020 has now been distributed by the district, and we will study the new Code to see if our recommendations have been included. We will also monitor discipline data relative racial disparities during the school year and compare data we gathered in 2018-2019 to this school year. **Finances/Resources: The district has received \$11.7 million additional dollars from the State of Illinois based on the new adequacy formula. We will be asking how those dollars are being directed toward our poorer students. The district has created a new funding formula of their own so poorer schools should be getting more \$\$ and we will ask how the schools are spending the additional \$\$.**

Goal #3: Students of Color – especially African-American and Hispanic – will be encouraged to enroll in and be enrolled in AP (Advanced Placement) classes and will receive the support they need to be academically successful. By 2020-2021 school year, Students of Color enrollment will have increased by 25% within these advanced curricular programs; these students will have received a final grade of “C” or better. The Action Team is reviewing the information provided by participants at the Joint Recruitment for City of Rockford and RPS Breakfast, August 10, 2019. We will gather information that applies to our goal in advocating for students of color-especially African-American and Hispanic- to enroll in and be enrolled in AP classes and to receive the support they need to be successful. We see the potential to partner/work with school counselors to help with enrollment in AP as well as to start a relationship with them to assist with Goal 1's work to communicate scholarship opportunities for Students of Color.

New suggestions we are considering :

These ideas have been suggested that the Education Team is considering how to move forward with:

1. Recruitment at HBCU National activities like a football classic.
2. RVC/Rockford University collaboration to communicate opportunities for success for students of color and the goals of ER815 to high school students.
3. Parent/Student Career Fair held in the evening.
4. RPS Counselor Conference administered by the district to make sure counselors understand the goals for progress related to students of color.
5. Investigate how we can collaborate with the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE).
6. Eliminate Racism could investigate how we can collaborate with RAMM.
7. Consider creating a group of students of color to form a youth wing of ER to pursue our goals.

Relationship Action Team:

The Relationship Team meets 1st Tues 6-7:15 at Pilgrim Church

Mission: to radically alter divisive social patterns by building genuine relationships across racial, religious, class, and cultural differences.

Sat. Aug. 10 Breakfast at Cliffbreakers: We helped E.R. provide 20 facilitators, and 20 recorders and held a training/refresher on Mon. **Aug 5 at 4:30pm at Bahai Center.** It was an amazing gathering of people, many of whom did not know each other, but had common longings for our schools, fire, police, and city... a singular event.

Library Staff: we are finishing the second round (each round has 4 sessions) with the 100 staff of the Rockford Library System. We have been looking at our cultural backgrounds, what racism is, what it is like to be of color in Rockford and will be moving toward what it is like to be white in Rockford, to have "advantage", what it is like to be "other". We will be using stories of our own and Rockford residents growing up in Rockford. We have begun in these groups to begin to trust, to dare to speak of our own lives and relationships.

What is difficult is that the make-up of groups changes each session and that challenges trust. On the other hand people who work with each other are getting to know each other in new ways and changing the work scene. One African-American woman looked over the group at the end of a session and said, "You know, I think we just could be... friends". That made my day.

Zeidler Training: there has been interest in having another training for facilitating groups. I contacted Katherine Wilson there and we have set up possible training for Fri Oct 25 6-8:30 pm and Sat Oct 26 from 8:30-4pm. We were very impressed with her work and would need \$2000 to do this again. \$200 for 10 new people and then no charge for those already trained to go again. Those of us who went the 2nd time benefited a lot from the confidence we gained with these skills. I have three people who are interested so far. We would again work on scholarships so that anyone can go who desired.

Church/ Organization interactions. We have spoken to various churches, organizations about having facilitated dialogues with each other. Still pending. We would be working up a model for these interactions. Our experience with the Library staff will help us.

We meet again Tues. Oct 1 at 6pm at Pilgrim Church. Jim Roberts for the Relationship Action Team.