



*Lori Jennings-Harris, Director
Cynthia Brown, Division Manager
Human Relations Commission*

James R. Guy, President
Michael R. Alderson, Jr., Commissioner
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

Since 1963, the St. Mary's County Human Relations Commission (HRC) 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.

Activities

The HRC continued their support of the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast held at St. Mary's College of Maryland by contributing to planning meetings for the event and assisting with public relations.

The HRC continued to seek ways to increase its community outreach efforts in light of the nation's gradual, yet ongoing, recovery from the pandemic. The Commission chose to increase its visibility through social media. Their Facebook page, which was initiated in 2021, proved to be an effective way to convey the mission and activities of the HRC, as well as show support for other community events and organizations committed to the ideals of civil rights and equity.

In February 2023, the HRC hosted a new member orientation. This half-day activity served as a refresher for current members and information session to welcome new members. The commission also initiated the request for a Black History Month proclamation from the St. Mary's County Board of Commissioners and invited numerous organizations to participate.

Commission members expressed the need for more education about local programs and services. To that end, guest speakers were invited to several meetings. In April, the Director from the Three Oaks Center was joined by staff from the St. Mary's Housing Authority to provide a presentation on homelessness prevention services.

In May, there was a presentation from the St. Mary's County Health Department.

The June meeting featured a presentation from the Director of St. Mary's County Department of Social Services (DSS).

The August meeting featured a presentation from the Director of the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation.

The Homeless Services Coordinator from DSS was the guest speaker at the September meeting to discuss shelter services during the winter months.

Challenges

Membership vacancies and meeting attendance remained a concern in 2023. Several members had work and family commitments that made it difficult to attend meetings. Often commission business could not be conducted due to not having a quorum.

Plans

HRC members continue to explore ways to better serve the community and promote the importance of positive relationships among all people. Members plan to observe directions provided by the State regarding human relations matters and research best practices from other jurisdictions. They also hope to partner with other human service organizations to convene public conversations regarding human relations and conflict resolution.

Membership as of December 31, 2023

Joshua Brewster
Joanna Colvin
Steve Hall
Max Levasseur
Cheremie Frisby-Spencer
Adrienne Dillahunt
Sean Wickers