

DRAFT

To: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

From: Byrd A. Lochtie, Chair  
Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

Subject: Annual Report July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006

### **PUBLIC CONTACT AND INPUT**

The Humboldt County Human Rights Commission (HRC) meets every second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in Conference Room A of the Courthouse. The meetings are open to the public and guests are encouraged to attend and to speak if they have a concern or a comment. The agenda for the meeting is posted in the Office of the Clerk of the Board the week before the meeting.

Citizens who come to the meetings may address the Commission on any topic or concern related to Human Rights as well as any issue that contributes to conflict or discrimination in our community. Periodically, we invite people to address the commission on specific topics, often having both sides of an issue represented. We also respond to written communications and to concerns raised through the media or by own members ranging from Death with Dignity to Mental Health concerns.

In addition to public input at the monthly meetings, HRC depends on our voice-mail system for contact with the public. Each commissioner monitors the messages for 15 or 16 days, returning calls and providing information and suggestions as needed. Commissioners contact another commissioner for help in answering questions whenever appropriate. The records of all phone contacts are used to provide information for this annual report.

The new phone intake form that we began using on July 1, 2005 has been very effective in allowing commissioners taking the phone calls to report the nature of the call in a consistent manner. The individual forms are turned in monthly to the Secretary and the information is tabulated at the end of the year for the annual report. A copy of that tabulation follows.

**HRC PHONE CALLS July 2005 through June 2006**

**Total number of calls to HRC message phone: \_\_\_\_\_**

Total calls by month: July \_\_\_ Aug. \_\_\_ Sept. \_\_\_ Oct. \_\_\_ Nov. \_\_\_  
 Dec. \_\_\_ Jan. \_\_\_ Feb. \_\_\_ Mar. \_\_\_ Apr. \_\_\_ May \_\_\_ June \_\_\_

**CATEGORIES FOR PHONE CALLS:**

**Just wanted to talk or tell some one about something:**      24                      17%

**A request for information about or help from the HRC**      33                      24%

**A request for information about or help from available services:**      11                      8%

**Complaints of Alleged Discrimination:**      11                      8%

**Discrimination perpetrated by:**

Law Enforcement	<u>3</u>	<u>2%</u>
Other Public Agency	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Private Company/Service(s)	<u>5</u>	<u>4%</u>
Private Citizen(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Other	<u>1 (everyone)</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>

**Discrimination based on:**

Disability	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Race/Ethnicity	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Age	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Gender	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Language	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Sexual orientation	<u>2</u>	<u>1%</u>
Health	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Residency	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Mental Health	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Religion	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Politics	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Other ( <u>1 breast feeding in jail,</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4%</u>

1 single father, 3 did not say)

**Discrimination relating to:**

Housing	<u>4</u>	<u>3%</u>
Employment	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Law Enforcement	<u>2</u>	<u>1%</u>
Other Public Agency	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Private person(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Company/Service(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>2%</u>

<b>Complaints of Alleged Misconduct.</b>	<u>64</u>	<u>46%</u>
Misconduct perpetrated by:		
Law Enforcement	<u>30</u>	<u>21%</u>
Other Public Agency	<u>9</u>	<u>6%</u>
Private Person(s)	<u>4</u>	<u>3%</u>
Private Company/Service(s)	<u>21</u>	<u>15%</u>
Misconduct relating too:		
Housing	<u>15</u>	<u>11%</u>
Employment	<u>6</u>	<u>4%</u>
Law Enforcement	<u>11</u>	<u>8%</u>
Other Public Agency	<u>3</u>	<u>2%</u>
Private Person(s)	<u>16</u>	<u>11%</u>
Private Company/Service(s)	<u>7</u>	<u>5%</u>

**Notes regarding HRC message phone calls:**

1. Call totals do not include duplicate or follow up calls from the same person concerning the same subject. Calls in which the nature of the call could not be determined were also not counted.
2. In some cases a call may have been assigned to more than one category so some totals are greater than the number of calls.
3. Discrimination is obviously a form of misconduct but has been reported here separately and not counted in the misconduct category.
4. A call reported in the discrimination or misconduct categories may have also requested information or referral. However, only the primary purpose(s) of the call has been reported.

**Commissioners on phone duty July 05 to June 06:**

July 1-15 Ben Shaeffer, 16-30 Rick Botzler  
August 1-15 Mike Orr, 16-31 Jack Shaffer  
September 1-15 B. Shaeffer, 16 -30 Mike Orr  
October 1 -15 Larry Miller, 16-31 John Lyons  
November 1 -15 Jamila Tharp, 16-31 Matt Filar  
December 1 -15 Abdul Aziz, 16 - 30 Angela Ward  
January 1 -15 Larry Miller, 16 -31 Michael Orr  
February 1 -15 Byrd Lochtie, 16 -28 Jack Shaffer  
March 1- 15 Mike Orr, 15 -31 Rcik Botzler  
April 1 -15 Mike Orr, 16- 30 Larry Miller  
May 1 -15 John Lyons, 16 - 31 Abdul Aziz  
June 1 - 15 Angela Ward, 16 - 30 Ben Shaeffer

## **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

HRC believes that community education is essential to develop understanding of, and tolerance for, diversity in Humboldt County. We worked on a number of items for outreach into the community.

- ◇ We continued the use of our Speakers Bureau for outreach into the community. At least five commissioners participated in forums, workshops and presentations in the community with topics ranging from “What is the Human Rights Commission” to “Learning about Islam” to “Language of Respect”. Some of these events were open to the public; others were held for students at specific schools. Feedback from the community has been positive.
- ◇ We presented an educational session at the Humboldt State University Education Summit. This was an interactive workshop entitled Sticks and Stones: Words Can Break Bones. It was designed to help participants develop an increased sensitivity to the effects of language in the classroom. Activities introduced the students to skills and techniques to avoid demeaning words and phrases and to encourage the use of respectful language.
- ◇ Larry Miller continued working on our website, providing easy access to useful information about the commission and about human rights, and adding linkages to other pertinent web sites. We requested and received funding for the domain name from the county.
- ◇ HRC continued the promotion of our resource cards, both in English and Spanish. We are now in the process of revising that card, with the intention of making it a wallet-size card with information useful for anyone in the community.
- ◇ We publicized Human Rights Awareness Month and received resolutions from several cities and the county.
- ◇ We decided that we should continue with a toll-free phone number, and requested, and received, funding for that number from the Board of Supervisors. We have publicized the availability of that service.
- ◇ We toured the County Jail in order to increase our understanding of the procedures and policies of the jail. With advice from Lt. Figas, we developed a Human Rights Commission information card to be posted in the County Jail.
- ◇ HRC initiated contact and networking with the Latino Net and the Community NETWORK, and maintained similar contact with the ACLU, the Independent Observers Program, and the Coalition for Police Review.
- ◇ We discussed the benefits to the Commission and the community from the proposed Media Center through the franchise agreements with Cox Cable, and wrote letters of support to the Board of Supervisors and the cities involved in the negotiations.
- ◇ The chair participated in an interview with KHSU.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

HRC began using the forms that were developed and/or revised in 2004-2005. We also held a planning retreat, giving us a chance to work together and discuss specific concerns at great length.

While this was an announced gathering of the members, it was mostly for discussion. No formal actions were taken during the retreat.

We also invoked the clause in our Bylaws that declares a member's position on the commission to be vacant after three consecutive absences with no explanation. We notified the former member and the Board of Supervisors of this action.

We worked with HSU to involve an intern in our meetings and our work. Our intern, Christine Ferguson, helped with the resource card, the website and our yearly calendar.

### **POSITIVE RECOGNITIONS**

The HRC and its commissioners believe that one way to enhance human rights in the county is to reinforce positive activities whenever we see them in our community. We have written several letters to people or groups who have contributed to the well-being of Humboldt County through their actions. Recipients have included Mr. Berkowitz and the KHUM staff for their "Stop the Violence" campaign, Eric Rofes and his staff for the Education Summit at HSU, and Christina Allbright for her contributions in working with the Commission and throughout the county.

### **IN RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS, THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION:**

- ◇ Provided help in communicating and resolving neighborhood conflicts and differences that were brought to our attention and wrote several letters to the people involved.
- ◇ Requested a change in wording ("people" rather than "citizens") in the resolution dealing with the Patriot Act which was passed by the Board of Supervisors.
- ◇ Investigated several reports of hate crimes in our area.
- ◇ Wrote a letter to the HSU Center requesting more information concerning at will employment agreements (with a copy to HSU President Richmond).
- ◇ Investigated a concern about Hate Crime Training for local police, and received information that this type of training is standard in Law Enforcement Academies.
- ◇ Encouraged the Board of Supervisors to review and revise the resolution on same-sex civil marriage that we recommended to the board last year. We appeared before the board and advocated for the approval of the amended resolution. HRC repeated its offer to help the board in any way in educating the community about this sensitive issue.

### **ONGOING ISSUES / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

- ◇ A logo for HRC.
- ◇ Goals for outreach.
- ◇ Working with HSU and Arcata businesses on ways to welcome students and the diversity they represent.
- ◇ Filling vacancies on the commission.
- ◇ Homelessness.
- ◇ Law enforcement concerns.

- ◇ More varied PSAs, to be more widely distributed.
- ◇ Newspaper columns on issues related to human rights.
- ◇ Another intern from HSU to work with the commission.
- ◇ Possible grants for projects.
- ◇ Mental health concerns.
- ◇ Training for law enforcement officers in dealing with the mentally unstable.
- ◇ Employment discrimination issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

The commissioners of HRC take seriously our charge to eliminate discrimination and the intolerance of diversity. We try to respond to all concerns raised by the public. We give out information to help people find the resources they need to cope with problems. We hope to educate people to help them understand differences better, and to value the diversity of our community. We welcome any suggestions from the supervisors to help us achieve our goals.