



**Humboldt County Human Rights Commission**  
**825 Fifth Street, Eureka, CA 95501**  
*Chair of the Commission ~ David Heise*

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011**

**TO: HUMBOLDT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**FROM: David Heise, Chair - Humboldt County Human Rights Commission**

### **GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION**

- Monthly meetings of the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission (HRC) are held at 5 p.m. the first Thursday of each month in Conference Room A at the Humboldt County Courthouse.
- Monthly meetings are open to the public and compliant with the Brown Act. Invited guests and drop-in members of the public are all encouraged to present their concerns and participate in discussion.
- The HRC endeavors to facilitate public discussion in a non-judgmental, non-partisan environment and makes a particular effort to see that divergent viewpoints are equally represented.
- A copy of the HRC meeting agenda is provided to the Board of Supervisors. The Clerk of the Board customarily posts the agenda on the courthouse bulletin board. Also, meeting agendas, as well as past meeting minutes and annual reports, are available on our website.

### **CURRENT COMMISSION MEMBERS**

**DISTRICT ONE:** Jean Munsee, James Rogers, and Lloyd Reece  
**DISTRICT TWO:** John Chiv and Larry Miller [one vacancies]  
**DISTRICT THREE:** [three vacancies]  
**DISTRICT FOUR:** Maggy Herbelin and Cheryl Seidner [one vacancy]  
**DISTRICT FIVE:** Byrd Lochtie, David Heise and John Shelter

TOTAL VACANCIES: 5

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

We have updated and maintained our website throughout the year. You may visit our website at [www.co.humboldt.ca.us/HumanRightsCom/](http://www.co.humboldt.ca.us/HumanRightsCom/). With the generous financial support of the **McLean Foundation** we were able to distribute several thousand *Humboldt County Resource Cards* in both the English and Spanish languages. We are continually updating and expanding the information crammed onto these cards and continue to have a high demand for cards from a multitude of local public service agencies.

Representatives from the Human Rights Commission participated in the following locally sponsored programs:

January 2011                      Humboldt County Point in Time Count (to determine how many homeless people are in Humboldt County).  
sponsored by Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition

August 2010                      HSU Volunteer/ Agency Fair  
sponsored by Humboldt State University

Humboldt Pride Celebration

October 2010                      Latino Net Health Fair

February 2010                      Annual Indian Island Candlelight Vigil  
sponsored by the Wiyot Tribe

HSU Volunteer/ Agency Fair  
sponsored by Humboldt State University

The Humboldt County Human Rights Commission (HRC) continues to be a proud member of NorCAN (Northern California Association of Nonprofits). We are continuing to participate in the Cal-Trans "Adopt-a-Highway" program. You can see the sign for the HRC's stretch of highway near Clam Beach. We continue to be available upon request as neutral observers for public meetings and demonstrations.

## PUBLIC CONTACT AND INPUT

HRC meetings are very open to public participation, and Commissioners are committed to being accessible, helpful and transparent. Members of the general public can contact commissioners at HRC meetings, through personal contact, by mail, through email, and via the Commission's telephone call system at (707) 268-2548 or toll-free at (866) 809-4373.

In the past year there were a total of 33 guests at monthly meetings. We received 2 letters and 2 emails. Our telephone call system is by far the most popular method people use to contact the Commission with a total of 66 telephone contacts being received in the past year. Though less frequent, Commissioners are also sometimes recognized in the community and approached, either to bring an issue to our attention or to thank us for the work that we do. The most common topics people wish to address continue to be law enforcement issues, homelessness, healthcare, mental health issues, or some form of discrimination.

Guests included journalists from local newspapers, representatives from local law enforcement and mental health agencies / boards, and advocates for homelessness, transgender, mental health issues. Informational presentations were given by representatives from Project H.E.A.L.T.H. (<http://www.lyon-martin.org/HEALTH/>) Humboldt Mediation Services (<http://www.humboldtmediationservices.org>), the New Directions program (homelessness), Sheriff Mike Downey and Mike Hislop (law enforcement issues), and individual advocates for county Mental Health and healthcare issues.

## RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS

This has been a rewarding year. We have had the satisfaction of making a difference addressing the concerns of the people of Humboldt County, especially in the areas of law enforcement, homelessness, immigration, and transgender discrimination, as well as helping numerous individuals needing referrals or help with problems arising from inhumane treatment or prejudice.

We continue to welcome diverse human-interest groups to present their concerns at our meetings. Most recently, we have had guests address the issues facing our local transgender population. Representatives from Project H.E.A.L.T.H. (<http://www.lyon-martin.org/HEALTH/>) brought to our attention the nature of the difficulties transgender persons often face when seeking standard health care, as well as inconsistencies in the wording of Humboldt County nondiscrimination policies. In cooperation with representatives from Project H.E.A.L.T.H., the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, County Council, and the Humboldt County Public Employees Union, we were able to work together to update the language of county nondiscrimination policies so as to be consistent amongst themselves and with the most current state regulations, which include language regarding discrimination based on gender identity. Transgender persons can face discrimination in various areas, such as healthcare, housing and employment. However, the changes recently made to county nondiscrimination policies are an important step in addressing those issues.

In response to public outcry following controversial policies reported in the news around the country, HRC co-sponsored - with the League of Women Voters and the Humboldt County Office of Education - an informational "Forum on Immigration Issues". The purpose of the forum was to help increase public understanding of the many facets relating to this public policy issue and allow a forum to discuss them. Panelists included: Melissa Rodezno (Congressional District Office: federal issues); Philip Arnot (local attorney: legal issues); Mary Ann Bansen (Bancrest Dairy: employment issues); Dr. Garry Eagles (County Superintendent of Schools: educational implications); Marina Cortez-Hash (LatinoNet: immigrant issues). The Forum was well-attended, with over 70 attendees, and covered in the press, both before the forum ("Forum tackles immigration issues: Thursday panel discussion aimed at increasing understanding of immigration policy issues": [http://www.times-standard.com/ci\\_16141364?IADID=Search-www.times-standard.com-www.times-standard.com](http://www.times-standard.com/ci_16141364?IADID=Search-www.times-standard.com-www.times-standard.com)), and afterwards ("Forum wrestles with immigration: Panelists discuss far-reaching impacts of immigration and immigration enforcement": [http://www.times-standard.com/ci\\_16162344?IADID=Search-www.times-standard.com-www.times-standard.com](http://www.times-standard.com/ci_16162344?IADID=Search-www.times-standard.com-www.times-standard.com)).

In response to continuing tensions in our community, The HRC worked with the BOS and local law enforcement officials to form the Citizen's Law Enforcement Liason Committee (CLELC) last

year. The committee is currently unstaffed. It is clear that we need to increase/improve our efforts at raising awareness of this committee, combating misconceptions regarding the nature of the committee, and recruiting members of the public to serve on the committee. In this regard a joint press release was recently put out by the Chair of the HRC, Sheriff Mike Downey, and the Chair of the BOS. The HRC will endeavor to continue to raise awareness of the committee and recruit members for it, through additional avenues. In that regard, we would like to note that at times the county has publicized the committee without reference to its defining document or without reference to one or more of the committee's purposes or powers (such as the role of being able to recommend an outside auditor). We believe that publicizing the complete purposes and powers of the committee will help in recruitment of participants and minimize misconceptions regarding the nature and role of this new committee.

Homelessness continues to be an on-going problem in our community. We continue to report to the Board on matters of housing or lack thereof. The homeless constitute one of the most vulnerable populations within any community. In Humboldt County, as elsewhere, there are insufficient affordable housing or shelter options to accommodate all local homeless individuals. Until there are enough housing and shelter options for everyone in need, we must keep our minds open to all possible options. In that regard, we continue to work with local agencies and programs to keep informed of and engaged with issues and solutions relating to homelessness. For example, the New Directions Program, which is an outreach, education and environmental maintenance program relating to homeless populations, has been enacted on a test basis in Palco Marsh, where there has been improved engagement and relations with homeless persons there, as well as reduced trash and reduced complaints from residents, businesses and the homeless. That success has led the City of Eureka to contract with the North Coast Resource Center to finance the New Directions Program to expand into Eureka, partnering with the city and business community in various ways. If the New Directions program continues to be successful in the above regards, the HRC would encourage the BOS to support its expansion into other areas in the county. Also, the Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition is working to implement a ten-year action plan to end homelessness in the community. The HRC will continue to work with these and other agencies and individuals to raise awareness in our community of homelessness issues, to promote innovative and successful programs for addressing homelessness, and to keep the Board informed of such issues, programs, and opportunities.

Availability of healthcare continues to be a problem year after year, and we will continue to do what we can to make referrals and help people find accessible affordable healthcare. We are also constantly aware of the prejudices and challenges facing those with mental health issues and strive to educate the public and to refer people to local mental health providers.

## CONCLUSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In light of the current economic crisis in government and throughout our community, it has been deeply satisfying to see tangible results to our efforts through the extraordinarily talented, publicly minded and dedicated people we are so lucky to have living and working in Humboldt County.

- We wish to thank the **McLean Foundation** for their continued financial support which made it possible to distribute **Humboldt County Resource Cards** to thousands of individuals throughout Humboldt County. The enormous popularity of these Resource Cards speaks loudly to the need to get public services information out to the people in a compact accessible form, and suggests the huge numbers of people who are undoubtedly reached and helped through this program.
- We wish to thank Humboldt County Sheriff **Mike Downey** and Humboldt County Board of Supervisors Chair, **Mark Lovelace**, for joining HRC Chair, David Heise, in a joint picture and press release to show support for and raise awareness of the Citizens Law Enforcement Liason Committee (CLELC) and help to fill openings on that committee.
- We wish to thank Project H.E.A.L.T.H., and in particular, Dawn Dickson and Loren Cannon, for bringing to our attention various issues of discrimination facing transgender members of our community.
- We wish to thank the **Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, County Council**, the **Humboldt County Public Employees Union**, and **Project H.E.A.L.T.H.** for working with us, and together, to update and make uniform the language of the various county nondiscrimination policies.
- We wish to thank the **Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, Arcata City Council, Eureka City Council**, and **Blue Lake City Council**, for issuing public Resolutions and/or Proclamations acknowledging December 2010, as Human Rights Awareness Month. We also wish to thank Eureka's **Arts Alive** for allowing one of our commissioners to read the proclamation at one of their venues during Human Rights Awareness Month. We believe such public acknowledgement raises awareness and fosters community interest in improving the human condition.
- We wish to thank **Access Humboldt** for their help in recording and broadcasting public forums, thereby reaching people who hadn't attended meetings. Access Humboldt's broadcasts not only raised awareness and educated the public on issues affecting our

community, but ultimately lead to wider public participation in the debate, perhaps resulting in fresh ideas and new solutions.

- We wish to thank the **League of Women Voters of Humboldt County (LWVHC)** and the **Humboldt County Office of Education** for co-sponsoring with us the informational Forum on Immigration Issues, held in September.
- We wish to thank the **Area One Agency on Aging** for providing meeting space for the HRC and LWVHC sub-committee on immigration issues to meet and plan for the Forum on Immigration Issues and **The Humboldt County Office of Education** for providing a site for the Forum.
- We wish to thank **Melissa Rodezno, Philip Arnot, Mary Ann Bansen, Dr. Garry Eagles,** and **Marina Cortez-Hash** for serving as panelists for our Forum on Immigration Issues.
- We wish to thank the **Wiyot Tribe** for holding the annual vigil at Tuluwat, with a ceremony that celebrates the enormous capacity within us all for renewal and healing.
- We wish to thank **NorCAN** for sponsoring educational workshops throughout the year addressing issues facing non-profit organizations and for their regular emailed newsletters of announcements of interest to non-profits.
- We wish to thank commissioners **Stuart Altscuhler** and **Neal Sanders** (who will not be continuing as commissioners) for years of service as Humboldt County Human Rights Commissioners.
- We wish to thank Nancy Hampton, who, as Administrative Assistant to the BOS has been an invaluable and helpful resource and liaison between the HRC and the BOS for several years. (Nancy will be moving to another position with the County).
- We wish to thank North Coast Resource Center (formerly Arcata Endeavor) for their many efforts and projects working to improve conditions and opportunities for the homeless.

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO BYRD LOCHTIE**

**Byrd Lochtie** has served on the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission since 2002. The Commissioners are deeply grateful to Byrd for tirelessly sharing her dedication, wisdom and experience with each of us and for her 10 years of service to our community as a highly respected Humboldt County Human Rights Commissioner. During that time, Byrd has served not only as a Commissioner, but as Vice-Chair and Chair of the Commission as well.

In my time as a Commissioner, and recently as Chair of the Commission, I have often looked to and benefited from Byrd's example, guidance and advice. Her dedication to service and her work-

ethic are admirable. Her compassion and tolerance are exemplary. Her insight and judgment have been invaluable. It has been my pleasure and honor to serve with Byrd Lochtie on the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission. The Commissioners unanimously join me in that sentiment.

On behalf of myself and the entire Humboldt County Human Rights Commission, we extend a big **THANK YOU** to Byrd Lochtie.

### **CLOSING**

On behalf of the entire Commission I wish to express that it has been our privilege to serve this past year at the direction of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors. We look forward to the Board filling our five vacancies and tackling fresh challenges in the coming year.

Respectfully,

David Heise  
Chair