

Operation Understanding returns to Hampton Roads in 2016



Barry and Lois Einhorn with OHUR class of 2003-2004

by Robin Mancoll

Founded by Lois and Barry Einhorn in 1998, Operation Understanding Hampton Roads was active until 2006. The program is re-launching in 2016 under the leadership of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, along with coalition partners, the Community Relations Council of the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater, the Tidewater Jewish Foundation, the Urban League of Hampton Roads, and the YWCA of South Hampton Roads.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2016 Operation Understanding Hampton Roads year-long leadership development program. Forty African American and Jewish high school students (sophomores and juniors, 20 from each community) will be accepted.

Over the course of the program, student participants build understanding, respect, and friendship through monthly workshops and a transformative summer Civil Rights trip. Participants develop their personal strengths, share one another's cultures and religions, and enhance their leadership abilities. By the conclusion of OUHR, graduates assume the responsibility for taking inclusive actions that foster pluralism and equality.

OUHR participants will be selected by mid-February, and the program activities run from March through October. Over the course of the year, students immerse

themselves in one another's historical, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds with many meaningful opportunities for discussion and interaction.

During each month of the OUHR program, students will participate in interactive and engaging workshops. These sessions offer participants an opportunity to bond as they explore history and values and build skills of dialogue, communication, and leadership. Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities facilitators will lead the sessions, in combination with community leaders in a variety of locations in an effort to expose participants to diverse sites within Hampton Roads.

A highlight of the OUHR experience is a summer Civil Rights trip offering unique opportunities to learn about African American and Jewish history and culture.

Beginning in August, participants will share what they have learned in OUHR through the development and implementation of personal action plans which include work with diversity clubs in schools, speaking about OUHR at community events, coordinating programs on tolerance, and more.

Applications for the 2016 OUHR class can be found at <http://www.inclusiveva.org/ouhr/> and are due no later than Monday, Feb. 1. Participants will be notified of their acceptance by mid-February. Contact Robin Mancoll, director, Community Relations Council of UJFT at RMancoll@ujft.org or 965-6120 for more information.