



SUMMER 2015

VOICES^{of} INCLUSION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE VIRGINIA CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

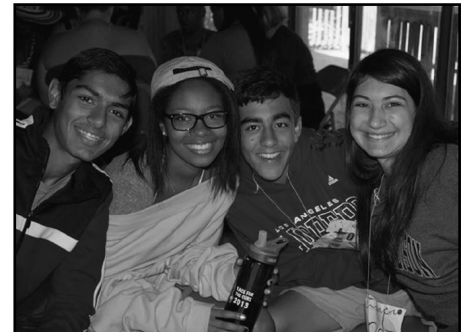
VCIC Programs Reach Record Numbers in FY15

Over 20,000 People Served Through Workshops, Retreats, Forums, and Presentations

After years of steady growth and impact, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities reached another milestone in Fiscal Year 2015, the period covering July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015. For the first time in the organization's 80-year history, VCIC directly reached over 20,000 Virginians through 203 individual programs delivered. These figures more than double the number of people participating in one year, and they mark an increase of over 470% in the past nine years.

In FY15, VCIC's staff and volunteer facilitators directly reached middle school and high school youth, college students, educators, business professionals, nonprofit employees, and community leaders. And through action plans developed by program participants that resulted in policy changes, new clubs and organizations, awareness campaigns, and presentations of learning, thousands of additional Virginians were positively affected by VCIC's work.

"The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities' remarkable reach over the last twelve months reflects the hard work of dedicated staff colleagues, board and chapter leaders, and partners all across Virginia," notes Jonathan C. Zur, President & CEO. "It is gratifying to be called upon by so many institutions who find lasting value from VCIC's programs."



Prejudice Awareness Summit Makes Positive Difference

Middle School Forum Reaches Over 200 Students and Educators Annually

One of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities' signature programs is the Prejudice Awareness Summit, a middle school forum founded in 2001 by the local chapter of Jewish Women International. This forum is led today by VCIC with support from a number of community coalition partners. Over 25 middle schools participate annually, sending teams of students and educators who learn to recognize prejudice and intolerance while developing conflict resolution skills. Participants leave the Prejudice Awareness Summit with action plans to share what they have learned with their schools.

In 2014-2015, grant funding from the Herbert J. and Ruth B. Rubel Holocaust Education Fund of the Richmond Jewish Foundation provided the opportunity for follow-up support for students implementing their action plans. At Boushall Middle School in Richmond, 8th grade students participated in four customized VCIC workshops to prepare them to lead discussions with 6th graders on bullying and behavior. At the end of the school year, Principal Widad Abed and Librarian Barbara Haas wrote, "We are utterly grateful for your time and effort with our students. Absolutely all of them noted that they wanted to continue this work at their high schools either by starting clubs or coming back to Boushall. Absolutely all of them indicated that they thought this kind of training was helpful to them personally. And absolutely all of them believed that they had made a difference in the climate of our school. We cannot thank you enough!"



Message from the President & CEO

Jonathan C. Zur

While I try to always stay positive and optimistic, I must admit that it has been increasingly difficult to do so over the last few months. I have been troubled by the many divisions in our nation that have led to violence and even murders motivated by hatred, intolerant statements from public officials, and what seems like an unwillingness in many communities for neighbors to engage in desperately needed dialogue across lines of difference.

I could choose in these moments to give up, to say that the problems are too big or that I am too tired, to question how much of a difference any of us can really make. However, it seems that every time I begin to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenges before us, a current or former VCIC program participant offers an inspiring reminder of the remarkable progress that has been made and the need for this organization's work to continue to expand and thrive.

There is the high school student who took the initiative after a VCIC retreat to lead a workshop for all of her teachers on more inclusive classroom practices, and the recent college graduate who wrote to let us know how much he was using what he learned from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities in his new workplace. There is the group of educators trained by VCIC who created a new outlet for students to improve their school's climate that was featured on the evening news. Or the hospital system that sought out VCIC to ensure that its policies are truly inclusive for all of the patients they serve.

So yes, there are days when I may feel tired and jaded. But the need is great and the work is making a difference. Thanks to so many inspiring people who partner with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, I remain convinced that we are moving ever closer to a truly equitable and just Commonwealth and country.

Chapter News

- **Lynchburg Chapter** - John S. Capps, President of Central Virginia Community College, chaired the chapter's May 27, 2015 Humanitarian Awards Dinner. That event honored Laura N. Dupuy, Walter M. Fore, Jr., Herbert R. Moore, Jr., Walker P. Sydnor, Jr., James A. Webster, and the E.C. Glass High School Football Coaches (1971-1976). Local programs include Project Inclusion for high school students, workshops for Lynchburg City Schools, Lynchburg College, and Randolph College, and a series for local businesses in partnership with the Office of Economic Development.
- **Peninsula Chapter** - Honorees for the chapter's 47th Humanitarian Awards Dinner were Tommy Garner, Chavis W. Harris, Martha B. Katz-Hyman, Ashby C. Kilgore, and Brian K. Skinner. The event was chaired by Robert R. Hatten and presented in association with the Daily Press. Project Inclusion sessions continue to be held for Hampton City Schools and Newport News Public Schools. Additional programs include Diversity Dialogue Day for high schools, along with workshops at Christopher Newport University, the College of William & Mary, and Thomas Nelson Community College.
- **Richmond Chapter** - On October 29, 2015, the chapter will recognize John V. Moeser, Thomas A. Silvestri, James R. and Margaret P. Spencer, Thelma Bland Watson, and Jewish Family Services. Locally, VCIC is active with the Prejudice Awareness Summit and Diversity Dialogue Day forums for local schools this fall. Additionally, workshops are being conducted for Bon Secours, Collegiate School, Dominion Resources, Higher Achievement, Leadership Metro Richmond, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, Partnership for the Future, and Richmond Public Schools.
- **Tidewater Chapter** - The 51st Humanitarian Awards Dinner took place on March 25, 2015. Chaired by Michael K. Kerner, that event honored Brenda H. Andrews, Gilbert T. Bland, James E. Parke, Leah and Richard Waitzer, and the SunTrust Foundation. Programming includes a formal partnership with the Hampton Roads Diversity and Inclusion Consortium, along with workshops for the Fleet Forces Diversity Leadership Summit, educators through the Simon Family JCC, Tidewater Community College, Virginia Wesleyan College, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Demonstrating Thought Leadership

As an indicator of increased growth and esteem, VCIC staff members are being called upon to share the organization's distinctive methodology and award-winning outcomes at local and national conferences.

Within the last year, VCIC has made keynote presentations or led workshops at regional diversity conferences for corporate and community leaders in Fredericksburg, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, Richmond, and Roanoke. Nationally, VCIC staff members were selected to make presentations at the Creating Change Conference in Denver, Colorado and the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education in Washington D.C.



Updated Website Spreads Message

In the summer of 2015, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities launched an updated website. If you haven't visited recently, be sure to check out www.inclusiveva.org for a newly organized site that provides clear descriptions of VCIC's programs, Humanitarian Awards, outcomes, and leadership.

The new website also offers many resources for schools and communities, as well as opportunities to participate by nominating a humanitarian, suggesting a board or chapter member, or requesting a program.

Inclusive Communities Welcomes New Program Staff

Kendra Cabler and Meriel Martínez Bring Significant Experience to Program Work



Kendra Cabler is Inclusive Communities' new Vice President of Programs. In this role, she provides leadership in the cultivation, design, delivery, and evaluation of VCIC's programming for middle school, high school, college, and adult populations.

Before joining VCIC, Kendra was actively involved in diversity education efforts at the collegiate level. She most recently served as Assistant Director for Student Diversity at the College of William & Mary, creating and sustaining inclusive learning environments. She also has work and internship experience at Hampton University and Thomas Nelson Community College.

Kendra received both her B.A. in Sociology and Africana Studies and her M.Ed. with a concentration in Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership from the College of William & Mary.

Meriel Martínez is Education & Training Coordinator for the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. Through her work, she designs and facilitates workshops and trainings for adults and students across the Commonwealth.



Bringing diverse experience to Inclusive Communities, Meriel has been an editor for a major educational publisher, has worked as Logistics Coordinator for the Virginia Latino Higher Education Network's Hispanic College Institute, has served as an Adjunct Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, and has been a volunteer ESL instructor.

Meriel received her M.A. in Speech and Interpersonal Communication from New York University. She studied at both Chestnut Hill College and William Paterson University, where she completed her B.A. in Communication.

Guiding Principles for Inclusive Public Prayer

Widely-Used VCIC Resource Updated by Religious Leaders from Across Virginia

Leading others in a group or community prayer places a special responsibility on those who accept such a task. The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities has developed the following suggestions for our friends of every faith when called upon to lead others in group prayer or public worship:

- Prayer is an act of worship of the Deity and should never be taken lightly or delivered without thoughtful preparation.
- Public worship and prayer is a time and opportunity to bring people together as one group, and thus should always be the most inclusive in nature.
- The language of such prayers or worship ought to be broad enough to include people of all faiths.
- Such prayers and petitions ought to be generic in nature while taking into account the diversity of the audience that is gathered.
- Those who lead such prayers should make them non-sectarian and respectful of the widely-held belief in God, while avoiding language or images that are connected to any one tradition or practice of a particular faith or religion.
- Worship leaders should be aware that they will often be called on “at the last moment” and thus be prepared with practiced prayers that include all.
- It should be recognized that not all worship leaders feel comfortable engaging in community prayer or public worship using non-sectarian vocabulary and gestures. These friends in our community should be appreciated for their viewpoint. However, those who are uncomfortable with the non-sectarian model should not accept invitations to lead prayer in a public setting with its inherent diversity.



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