



SUMMER 2013

VOICES^{of} INCLUSION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE VIRGINIA CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

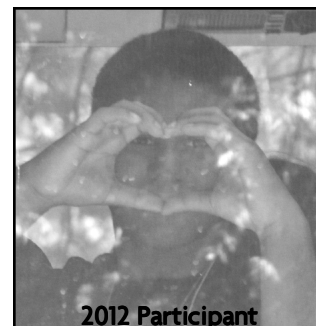
Connections Institute Celebrates 20th Anniversary Summer

Diversity and Leadership Program Has Trained Thousands of High School Students

They were once teenagers -- anxious, curious, and hopeful. In high school they may have been leaders, class clowns, disruptors, or unassuming. Now they are teachers, psychologists, politicians, and police officers, and they have the Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Connections Institute to thank for transforming them into engaged citizens who understand the importance of working together across lines of difference in our increasingly diverse world.

Since 1993, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities' Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Connections Institute (known in its early years as the Metrotown Institute), has been positively transforming high school students' lives. The list of graduates boasts an impressive group of emerging leaders throughout Virginia and our country.

Over the years, this leadership program has prepared thousands of student delegates to make decisions based on an appreciation of the vast diversity within Virginia. The Connections experience begins with a five-day residential program during the summer that allows student delegates to break barriers, deal with biased behavior, and develop an action plan to reduce prejudice in their schools. After the program, students are equipped to spread a message of inclusion in their schools, at their homes, and throughout the rest of their lives. As one parent noted, "All



the things we, as parents have tried to instill in him, were exemplified in just five days. It has meant so much to our family. We still refer to his time there and are grateful that Connections is changing young peoples' lives. What an amazing gift to all our kids."

The 2013 Institute will take place at the Jamestown 4-H Educational Center in Williamsburg, Virginia. Over 60 high school students from 14 schools and organizations will participate, thanks to funding support from the R.E.B. Foundation. The program will be facilitated by VCIC professional staff, as well as nearly 20 volunteers. If you would like to visit the 20th anniversary summer Connections Institute during one of these opportunities, kindly RSVP by emailing contact@inclusiveva.org:

- **Sunday, August 11 (7:30pm-10:00pm)**
- **Tuesday, August 13 (10:30am-12:00pm)**
- **Wednesday, August 14 (7:00pm-9:30pm)**



VCIC Recognized by General Assembly

The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities was proud to be commended by the Virginia General Assembly during the 2013 Legislative Session. House Joint Resolution No. 790 noted the organization's "workshops, retreats, programs, and initiatives, such as the Educational Equity Initiative and Prejudice Awareness Summit, [for] helping institutions and individuals foster environments where all can thrive and contribute." Pictured are Delegate Betsy B. Carr with members of VCIC's State Board of Directors and staff.



Message from the President & CEO

Jonathan C. Zur

As our nation marks the 50th anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech this year, it is an opportune time to reflect on the power of dreams. Indeed, countless people have dreamt about greater inclusion and acceptance in our Commonwealth and country. And, perhaps more importantly, many have worked diligently to bring those dreams closer to reality.

At the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, our work also began as the product of dreams. It was in 1935 that a group known as the "Tolerance Trio" were invited to speak on the campus of Lynchburg College. This minister, priest, and rabbi team spoke about the value of interfaith understanding at a time when that message was particularly unique. Nearly 1,000 people came to the event, and inspired by what they heard, they created local chapters of the Virginia Region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ).

Today, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities carries forward the legacy of the NCCJ Virginia Region and the dreams of the Tolerance Trio. These pioneers could not have known how their dreams would lead to an organization that is helping schools, businesses, and communities achieve success through inclusion 78 years later. Yet, it was the combination of their dreams and hard work that catalyzed the award-winning organization we have become.

Similarly, the workshops, retreats, and customized programs that VCIC leads today catalyze dreams of a more inclusive Virginia for generations to come. We know that we cannot do this work alone. Thanks to your generous support, together we move ever closer to making Dr. King's dreams our shared reality.

Chapter News

- **Lynchburg Chapter** - Under the leadership of Dinner Chair P. Tulane Patterson, CEO of Generation Solutions, the chapter's 46th annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner took place on June 5, 2013. Robert H. Barlow, Robert A. Leveque, Ida B. Powell, and Willie E. Thornhill were recognized at the event. Recent programs include a workshop for STEP with Links, a Diversity Dialogue Day forum for area high schools, an Allies Institute retreat for Lynchburg College, and a workshop for Leadership Lynchburg.
- **Peninsula Chapter** - Molly Joseph Ward, Mayor of the City of Hampton, chaired one of the most successful Humanitarian Awards Dinners in chapter history. The event honored Jenever Hill Brown, Howard E. Heard, Joseph H. Latchum, Jr., Wayne A. MacMasters, Sylvia S. Weinstein, and the Riverside Foundation. Project Inclusion sessions were held for Hampton City Schools and Newport News Public Schools. With support from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, educator professional development sessions are taking place at Bethel and Kecoughtan High Schools.
- **Richmond Chapter** - Honorees for the chapter's 51st annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner on October 30, 2013 are Kathleen Burke Barrett, Martin P. Beifield, M. Imad Damaj, Delores L. McQuinn, Amy P. Nisenson, and CarMax. The event will be co-chaired by Thomas A. Silvestri and Stewart D. Roberson. Local programs include Diversity Dialogue Day and the Prejudice Awareness Summit, along with workshops for Altria, Blue Sky Fund, Collegiate School, Leadership Metro Richmond, Partnership for the Future, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Williams Mullen. A new workplace inclusion initiative is in development.
- **Tidewater Chapter** - On March 21, 2013, the chapter's 49th annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner honored Carlos J. Clanton, Harold J. Cobb, Jr., Barbara Hamm Lee, Robert C. Nusbaum, and Marian Bear Ticatch. Jerry A. Bridges, President and CEO of The Bridges Group International, chaired the event. Local programming is being conducted for Norfolk Collegiate School, Tidewater Community College, and the Virginia STEAM Academy, in addition to the Diversity Dialogue Day forum and co-sponsorship of the NEXUS Interfaith Dialogue Series.

Evaluating Our Work

With great appreciation to The Community Foundation Serving Richmond and Central Virginia, VCIC is utilizing a capacity building grant for program evaluation and staff development. As the number of programs delivered annually by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities continues to grow, board and staff members have recognized the need to be able to measure outcomes and ensure that the organization effectively responds to community needs.

Dr. Bonnie B. Dowdy, a developmental psychologist, has been engaged as a consultant to work with VCIC. Under Bonnie's leadership, VCIC staff members are engaged in a seven-month training process to develop logic models for major programs, improve program evaluations, and establish processes to ensure sustainability beyond the conclusion of the grant.

"Through this grant, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities is able to more confidently fulfill our mission of 'achieving success through inclusion,'" notes Jonathan Zur, President & CEO.

Building Inclusive Nonprofits

New Series Launched with Nonprofit Learning Point

Recognizing the critical role that nonprofit professionals play in communities across Virginia, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities has partnered with Nonprofit Learning Point to launch the "Building Inclusive Nonprofits" series. Three courses are being offered: "Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce," "Inclusive Ways to Work with Clients," and "Building a Diverse and Inclusive Board of Directors." By completing the series, students will obtain a holistic view of how to engage a diverse group of stakeholders in nonprofit organizations. Participants receive a Certificate of Completion from VCIC after taking all three courses.

Employees from a range of nonprofit organizations have participated in the series, including agencies that focus on the arts, college preparation, health and wellness, homelessness, and services for people with disabilities. All agreed that the courses had relevance for their missions and outreach.

Early feedback about the series has been incredibly positive. 100% of participants rated the inaugural class as "Excellent" on post-program evaluations, specifically acknowledging the design of the sessions and material covered. One participant noted, "This course was great. I learned a lot about how inclusion is/is not perceived and know that it will help me in many aspects of my career." Another added, "One of the best classes I have taken (and I've taken a lot!)"

Qasarah D. Spencer Named Special Events Coordinator

New Employee Brings Significant Experience to Inclusive Communities

The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities welcomes Qasarah D. Spencer as Special Events Coordinator. In her role, Qasarah is responsible for planning and executing the organization's Humanitarian Awards Dinner events and program conferences. She brings a wealth of experience in for-profit and non-profit sectors in areas including accounting, marketing, volunteer coordination, program development, and curriculum instruction and design.

Qasarah was most recently Program Director and Community Coach at Embrace Richmond, where she coached and trained local residents, supporting the creation of community-led initiatives using asset-based community development principles. A current Richmond Hill Council member, Qasarah is a graduate of the Minority Political Leadership Institute (2006) and the Initiatives of Change/Hope In the Cities Connecting Communities Fellowship Program (2007). She holds Masters degrees in Divinity and Social Work from The School of Theology at Virginia Union University and Virginia Commonwealth University, respectively. Qasarah earned her BSW from Norfolk State University.



VCIC Supports Richmond Ballet's Minds in Motion

"The Epic of Gilgamesh" Promotes Anti-Bullying Theme

During the 2012-2013 school year, Richmond Ballet partnered with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities on the innovative Minds in Motion program. For eighteen years, Minds in Motion has worked with fourth grade students, teaching them discipline, dedication, and self-awareness through movement and dance performances. Wanting to work with students on the topic of bullying, Richmond Ballet reached out to VCIC for professional development and consulting support.

Inclusive Communities staff members provided several days of training to Minds in Motion teaching artists and fourth grade faculty at participating schools. Curriculum, research, and methodologies provided by VCIC were used in the development of "The Epic of Gilgamesh," the culminating performance of the Minds in Motion year. Representing 18 schools, 1,400 fourth grade students participated in the final performances alongside dancers from the professional company. Over the course of the school year, they built relationships with peers from a range of backgrounds, learned about the consequences of bullying, and identified strategies for intervening when they witness or experience bullying.



Phone: (804) 515-7950
Fax: (804) 515-7177
Email: contact@inclusivelya.org
Web: www.inclusivelya.org

Jonathan C. Zur
President & CEO

Allison M. Conyers
Director of Education & Training

Jessica M. Hawthorne
Youth Program Coordinator

Martie O'Connell
Vice President for Administration

Qasarah D. Spencer
Special Events Coordinator

5511 Staples Mill Road, Suite 202
Richmond, VA 23228



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