



SUMMER 2009

VOICES *of* INCLUSION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE VIRGINIA CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Project Inclusion Creating Safer Schools Across Virginia

Highest Number of Sessions Conducted During 2008-2009 School Year

More and more Virginia high schools are reaping the benefit of Project Inclusion each year. Administrators credit the program with improving school climates, reducing incidents of bullying and violence, and helping to build stronger connections between students and educators.

Since 2001, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities has offered the Project Inclusion program (formerly "Unitown") to Virginia high schools. Designed for students from a single school or district, this four-day, three-night retreat gives participants the opportunity to learn about diversity and prejudice, gain insight into their own lives and values, and develop action plans to share their learning with their peers.

During the 2008-2009 school year, five Project Inclusion sessions were held, one each for the Hampton City Schools, Lynchburg City Schools, and Richmond-area schools through a partnership with ROSMY, and two sessions for the Newport News Public Schools.

Comments from student participants demonstrate the power of the Project Inclusion experience:

- **"Project Inclusion was definitely the most important thing that has happened to me in my entire life."**
- **"I wouldn't trade this experience for the world. I hope that more students could experience these kinds of emotions and revelations."**
- **"I've finally begun to understand my purpose in life, and that is to help others."**
- **"I now know how to change my school."**
- **"Project Inclusion totally and completely changed the way I look at males and females."**
- **"I learned a lot about myself and was able to get rid of stereotypes I had of people with a different race, religion, or sexual orientation."**
- **"I'll do all I can to make a change in my school and in the community."**

Jonathan C. Zur Named President & CEO

New Leader Oversaw Major Growth in Programs for Inclusive Communities

On July 1, 2009, Jonathan Zur began his tenure as President & CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. "We are fortunate to have recruited someone with Jonathan's talent and skill to serve as our new executive," notes State Board Chairman John G. Myers, Jr. "Under his leadership, Inclusive Communities is poised to expand its outreach and service across the Commonwealth."

In his new role, Jonathan is responsible for the organization's administration, fund development, and programming. Formerly the Chief Operating Officer and Vice President for Program Operations, Jonathan has led a 152% increase in the number of programs offered by Inclusive Communities.

Before coming to Inclusive Communities, Jonathan was Program Manager for the American Conference on Diversity. From 2003-2004, he was founding Director of A More Perfect Union, a September 11th anti-bias project. Jonathan is a graduate of the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership Studies.



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Message from the President & CEO

Jonathan C. Zur

It is a special honor to serve as President & CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities because I know firsthand how powerful our work can be.

As a high school student, I had the opportunity to participate in programming sponsored by our affiliate office in New Jersey. Over the past ten years, I have volunteered and then served on the full-time staff for this organization, most recently as Inclusive Communities' Chief Operating Officer. During this time, I have seen literally thousands of lives transformed by Inclusive Communities' work.

These successes range from the middle school student who increased her attendance because she no longer feared bullying and harassment on the school bus, to the high school student whose grades improved after he saw himself reflected in the curriculum, to the college student who found her passion and changed her major after going through our program, to the business leader who made a commitment to reducing discrimination in his workplace and in the community.

With our Commonwealth and country becoming more diverse, the need for the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities becomes that much greater. It is because of the dedication of individuals and organizations across Virginia that we are able to offer record numbers of programs each year that help our schools and communities become more inclusive, respectful, and accepting places.

So, as one of the many people whose lives have been transformed by this organization, please accept my deep and heartfelt thanks. With your support, we will be able to share our work with even more people in the months and years to come.

Chapter News

The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities is fortunate to rely on the leadership of four chapter boards. Thanks to the guidance and direction offered by our volunteer members, our organization is able to engage in relevant and timely work all across the Commonwealth.

- **Lynchburg Chapter** - Charlie C. Boyd, Jr., of B&W Technical Services Group, will serve another term as chapter chair. A successful Project Inclusion program was held for E.C. Glass High School in March, and plans are being made for a January 2010 Allies Institute retreat for Lynchburg College.
- **Peninsula Chapter** - Guy G. Levy, DDS, continues as chapter chair. Planning is underway for the chapter's 42nd annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner, scheduled for February 25, 2010. Significant programming continues to be offered to both the Hampton City Schools and the Newport News Public Schools.
- **Richmond Chapter** - William A. Harrison, Jr., of the American Red Cross, is the new chapter chair. Preparations continue for the chapter's 47th annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner on October 27, 2009. Recent programs have been conducted for Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, and Richmond City Schools.
- **Tidewater Chapter** - Vernon M. Fareed, of Masjid William Salaam, is chapter chair. The NEXUS Forum remains a signature program, co-sponsored with the Virginian Pilot and Virginia Wesleyan College. Programming is being pursued with the Norfolk Public Schools.

FY10 New Board Members

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| ■ Kevin Cash
(Lynchburg Chapter) | ■ Bill Harrison
(State Board) |
| ■ Dan Cawley
(Tidewater Chapter) | ■ Usha Koduru
(Richmond Chapter) |
| ■ Sonya Daniels
(Peninsula Chapter) | ■ Jo Murphy
(Richmond Chapter) |
| ■ Martin Einhorn
(Tidewater Chapter) | ■ Doug Sorensen
(State Board) |
| ■ Ben English
(Richmond Chapter) | ■ Donna Woods
(Peninsula Chapter) |
| ■ Carmen Foster
(State Board) | ■ Nhu Yeargin
(Peninsula Chapter) |
| ■ Cathie France
(Tidewater Chapter) | ■ Jonathan Zur
(State Board) |

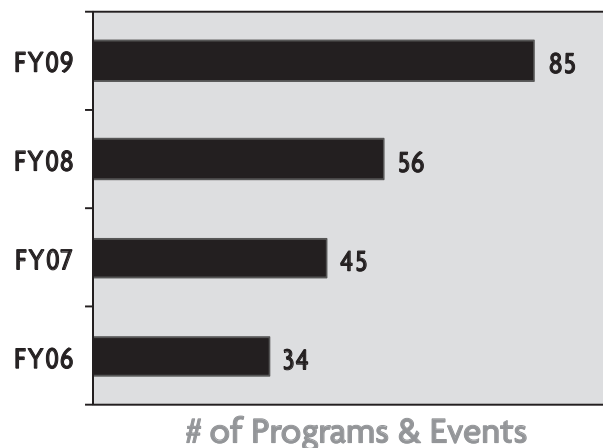
Break the Cycle: Be the Change

Assembly Program Delivers Powerful Message

One of Inclusive Communities' most popular programs is Break the Cycle: Be the Change, a fast-paced, interactive assembly that is offered to middle school, high school, and college students. Exploring the sources and consequences of prejudice, this 75-minute presentation uses humor, role playing, audience participation, and real-life examples to motivate students to consider the ways in which they may have contributed to prejudice. It also helps them to assume responsibility to work for change as agents of unity in their schools.

Thousands of students experience Break the Cycle: Be the Change each year, and feedback from audience members is consistently positive. One participant commented that it was "the most effective presentation on the issue that I have ever seen." Another stated, "I hope [Break the Cycle: Be the Change] will have as big an effect on everyone else as it did on me."

Number of Programs Continues to Grow



The number of programs and events delivered by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities has increased by 152% since 2005. The organization now works with an average of 7,500 people annually, sharing its message of understanding and respect.

Inclusive Communities Welcomes New Staff

Ali Thompson and David LeFebvre Bring Significant Experience to Program Work



Alicia R. Thompson is Inclusive Communities' new Director of Education and Training. In her role, she is responsible for designing and facilitating programs for adults and youth across the Commonwealth. "Ali brings a wealth of experience to her position,"

notes Jonathan Zur, President & CEO. "Her presentation skills and knowledge of diversity issues will be especially valuable to our organization."

An educator for over 15 years, Ali has taught in all three divisions of K-12 schools. She also has experience as a school administrator. Ali currently serves as President of the Virginia Diversity Network, is a board member for ROSMY, and volunteers with Comfort Zone Camp. She is also a 2009 graduate of Leadership Metro Richmond's "Quest" program.

Ali earned her B.S. from Syracuse University in Environmental Design and her M.A. in Educational Leadership and Administration from The George Washington University.

David E. LeFebvre is Program and Event Coordinator for the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. In his role, he plans, organizes, and manages events and programs, including Humanitarian Awards Dinners, high school and college retreats, and one-day forums on diversity issues.



"David is a talented event planner and program facilitator," states Jonathan Zur, President & CEO. "His passion for youth leadership and diversity programs is very much aligned with our mission."

A graduate of Rockhurst University, David has worked or volunteered for Nonprofit Connect (formerly the Council on Philanthropy), the Ronald McDonald House Charities, the National 4H Council, and Classic Upward Bound. Since 2003, he has had a relationship with Inclusive Communities' affiliate office in Omaha, Nebraska, first as a program participant, and then as an office intern, program counselor, and program advisor.

Connections Institute Visiting Opportunities

The 2009 Harold M. Marsh, Sr. Connections Institute will bring together nearly 60 students representing 12 high school teams for a five-day, four-night retreat. This year's session takes place at Chanco on the James Conference Center in Surry, Virginia. While at Connections, student participants learn to break down barriers, deal with biased behavior, and develop action plans to reduce prejudice in their schools.

"There is nothing quite like seeing the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities' programming firsthand," notes Ali Thompson, Director of Education & Training. "Visiting the Connections Institute, in particular, offers a special opportunity to observe the unique conversations that take place when student leaders from across Virginia come together to learn how to create more respectful, accepting school communities."

Please RSVP to David LeFebvre, Program & Event Coordinator, by email to dlefebvre@inclusiveva.org if you would like to visit during one of these designated times:

- Sunday, August 16 (8:00pm-10:00pm) - Cycle of Prejudice Workshop
- Monday, August 17 (2:00pm-3:30pm) - Religion Workshop
- Tuesday, August 18 (10:30am-12:30pm) - Body Image Workshop
- Wednesday, August 19 (7:00pm-9:30pm) - Culture and Belief Presentations



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