



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

_____ 18 _____

Date September 28, 2009

Submission of Des Moines Human Rights Commission Annual Report for 2008-9.

Moved by _____ to receive and file.

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNE				
COLEMAN				
BENSLEY				
KIERNAN				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
VLASSIS				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

_____ Mayor

_____ City Clerk

Des Moines Human Rights Commission



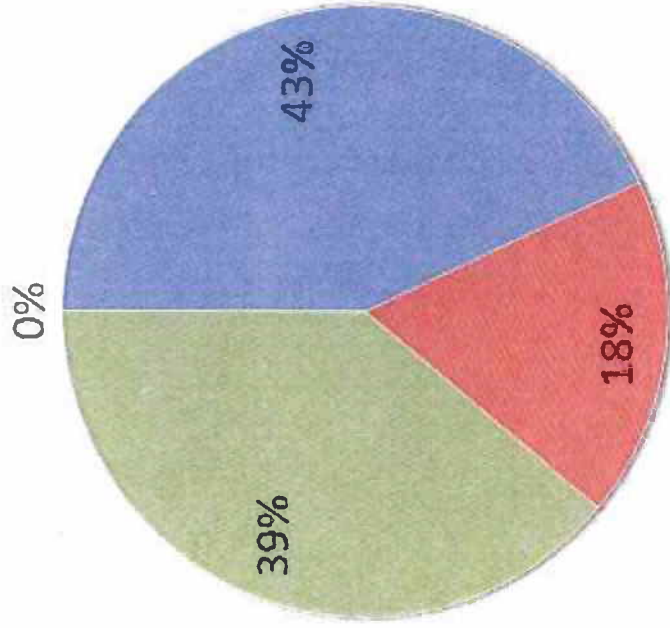
Commemorating Sixty Years Universal Human Rights

Annual Report
2008-2009

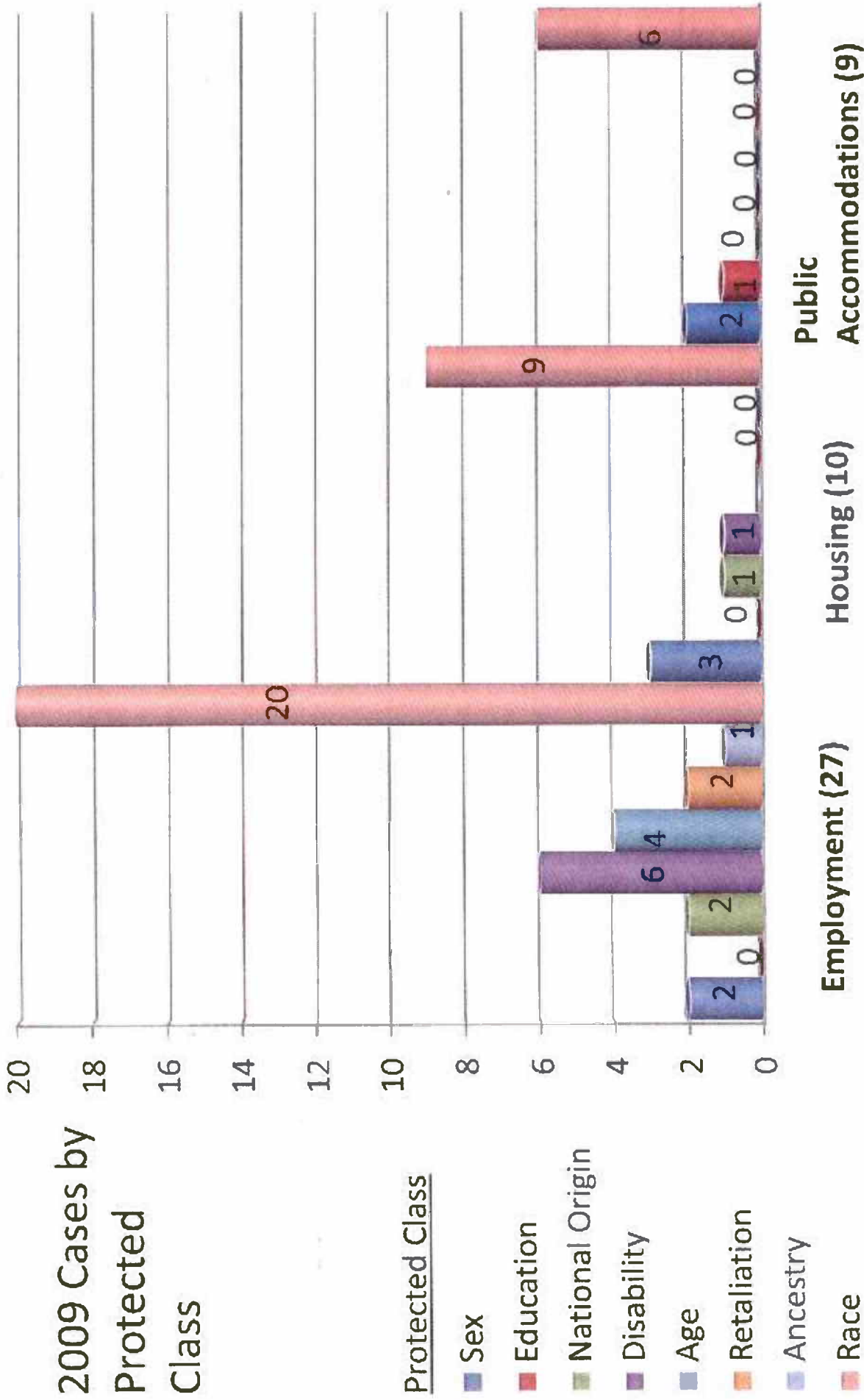
FY 2008-2009 Cases

By Protected Area

■ Employment ■ Public Accommodations ■ Housing ■ Municipal Practices



2009 Cases by Protected Class



Please note, some cases were filed under multiple classes.



September 16, 2009

Commissioners

Nancy Bobo, Chair
Peggy Dandy, Vice Chair
Michelle Bailey, Secretary
Som Buccam
David Drake
Ruth Ann Gaines
Stuart Juarez

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

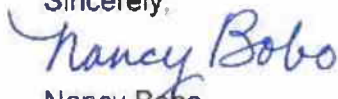
I am happy to forward to you the *2009 Annual Report of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission*.

Our activities this year focused on strengthening our community educational outreach, most notably in the area of fair housing. This was made possible by the support of two (2) full-time VISTA volunteers doing a great deal of outreach and education on the *mission, purpose and processes* administered by the Des Moines Human Rights Commission (DMHRC). Due to the ongoing hard work of our Director, Rudy Simms, the Human Rights Department has maintained our "Substantial Equivalency" status with HUD that had been under challenge and close scrutiny by Regional Office staff in Kansas City, KS, due to the lack of adequate case processing in the fiscal years between 2002 & 2006. Director Simms' diligent work in interpreting our case processing and community education improvements to HUD regional staff resulted in the tripling of our annual funding over the previous fiscal year. This year we have also had a modest increase in staff time allotted to case processing due to the addition of a temporary part-time employee and a focused effort on investigation. The additional staffing resulted in a 16% increase in the number of cases closed in the fiscal year.

Our 23rd Annual Symposium, "Weathering the Storm: Preserving Human Rights in Tough Financial Times" drew over one hundred and fifty (150) participants to Des Moines University, the symposium presenting sponsor and underwriter, Region VII HUD Director Myrtle Wilson, was the keynote presenter. This year Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie made two Symposium presentations and representatives from nine (9) City Departments participated in the Symposium sessions which greatly enriched the experience.

In December we held our second International Human Rights Day Celebration. This marked the 60th anniversary of the passage of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by the United Nations (1948). The cover photo features Eleanor Roosevelt who chaired the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* effort holding the Charter. Roosevelt later appeared in Des Moines in 1951 at the invitation of the Mayor's Commission on Equal Opportunity where she gave three (3) talks to advance the effort for addressing civil rights and equal employment in Des Moines. These efforts were the forerunner to the establishment of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission.

Sincerely,


Nancy Bobo
Chair

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council:

The 2009 Fiscal Year marked the **fifty-fifth (55th)** year of implementing the mission of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission (DMHRC). The cover photo for this year's Annual Report remembers Eleanor Roosevelt's 1951 visit to Des Moines at the invitation of the Mayor's Committee on Human Rights. Roosevelt gave three talks during a two day conference attended by business, government and community leaders from all sectors. These organizing meetings

Des Moines Human Rights Commission (DMHRC)

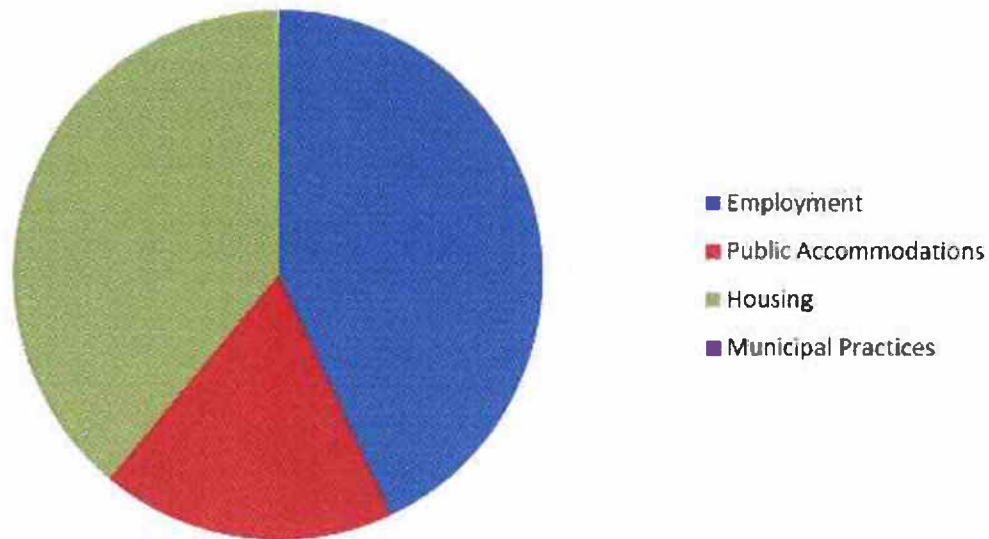
The DMHRC consists of seven (7) commissioners appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The commissioners serve without compensation, investigating allegations of discrimination in the areas of Employment, Public Accommodation, Housing and Municipal Practices. This year the Commission filled a year-long vacancy on the Commission by welcoming Dr. David Drake to the Commission as its seventh member.

Four (4) City employees (Director, Sr. Human Relations Specialist, Human Relations Specialist (.5 fte) and Sr. Executive Administrative Assistant) serve the DMHRC. The Commission is also currently assisted by two full-time and one summer part-time VISTA Volunteer(s). The staffing component also reflects the addition of a contracted (.5 fte) Human Relations Specialist.

DES MOINES HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINTS

In FY 2009, DMHRC staff received and investigated forty-six (46) complaints filed by residents of the City of Des Moines. The complaints were in the areas of Housing, Employment and Public Accommodations. The commission investigated and closed twenty-eight (28) cases during the fiscal year. Forty-three percent (43%) of the case closures during the fiscal year reflected Employment issues, while eighteen percent (18%) addressed instances of Public Accommodation concerns and the remaining thirty-nine percent (39%) addressed Housing. There were nineteen (19) open cases on file at the end of the fiscal year. Eighty-six (86) other residents sought assistance at the Commission but did not file a complaint either due to their concern not being in the purview of the Commission's authority and/or the problem being resolved by information received through Commission contact and /or referral to other sources.

2009 Fiscal Year Closed Cases



PUBLIC EDUCATION

Working together the DMHRC Director, DMHRC Commissioners and volunteers were able to increase public education about and marketing of the visionⁱⁱ, goalsⁱⁱⁱ and legal reality of Fair Housing to businesses, churches, neighborhood associations, community centers, and human service agencies across the City of Des Moines. Increased visibility in the community resulted in increased inquiries from those seeking housing and human rights information, social service referrals and/or a greater understanding of their rights under the Des Moines Human Rights Ordinance.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Educational outreach is a deliverable of DMHRC's contract with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This year a focused plan to inform residents of their rights under the Fair Housing Act was implemented. In January, over 66,300 Des Moines households received fair housing information in their Des Moines Waterworks monthly bill. Fair housing information was disseminated in two (2) issues of the *City Source Newsletter* which is mailed quarterly to 166,000 Des Moines residents.

HALF-TIME HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIALIST POSITION ADDED

In May, the addition of a (.5 fte) Human Rights Specialist to Commission staffing brought the promise of increased efficiency in case processing and taking complaints from the community.

TWO VISTA WORKERS ASSIST DMHRC IN CAPACITY BUILDING & OUTREACH

Again in 2009, two (2) VISTA volunteers have assisted the DMHRC staff in capacity building and outreach in the area of Fair Housing and Human Rights. The VISTA workers are assigned to the Des Moines Human Rights Commission through a grant partnership with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. The VISTA workers continue to design educational strategies and marketing materials and implement community programming initiatives. VISTA workers disseminate information about fair housing, interpret human rights issues and conduct local training opportunities to address human rights issues.

BRINGING THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MESSAGE TO THE CITIZENS OF DES MOINES AND IOWA

Again this year, from February to April, DMHRC partnered with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to air fifty-three (53), thirty (30) second commercial television spots on KCCI-TV during prime time. These spots reached 653,789 individuals who viewed them at least once (Neilson Company, quoted by Randy Vonahemec-KCCI). Weekly New Iowa Bystander ads reaching 5000 people were purchased. Targeted marketing efforts using colorful posters with tear-off information cards were distributed across the community to 1200 *people-frequented* locations that are ordinarily not reached by print and/or television. Five hundred eighty nine (589) informational mini-posters on housing, public accommodations and employment were distributed to local agencies providing human and shelter services. Additionally, DMHRC continues to work closely with City Information Officer, Amelia Hamilton-Morris to make information available to the community through the City Source magazine and Channel 7 television programming.

Through the support of Greater Des Moines Friends of Human Rights and Prairie Meadows Race Track and Casino, and VISTA, DMHRC was able to train volunteer presenters for increased summer Fair Housing Education in the community.

FAIR HOUSING TESTING

VISTA staff continue to do fair housing outreach and education in the larger Des Moines community. Current training sessions are in process to prepare local residents to perform future fair housing testing in Des Moines.

SUBSTANTIAL EQUIVALENCY

Another fulfilled purpose of the enhanced marketing efforts and increasing community education sessions in Des Moines has been to address and meet contract compliance requirements with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This year DMHRC's Director, Rudy Simms, completed the prescribed five week course given at the National Fair Housing Training Academy in Washington, D. C. The Des Moines Human Rights Commission's "*substantial equivalency*" designation is a mandatory requirement for receiving payment for investigating and resolving HUD housing complaints and attending HUD trainings was maintained. This is the first year since the founding of the Commission that a Staff person met the training standard.

COMMISSIONER TRAINING

Staff and Volunteers have worked together to broaden the impact of the Commission^{iv} by adding training sessions to regular Commission meetings and by seeking community input to further increase educational activities. Three public commission events were held in this fiscal year. In January, the Commission met with the City Council for the Commission's Annual Review of its work. Open to the public, the Commission presented its accelerated work plan and product. In March, the Commission held a Public Forum on Race following a local incident in the community. Thirty- five (35) citizens attended the event held in the Des Moines City Hall Council Chambers.

23rd ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Once again the highlight of the year was the 23rd Annual Symposium of Civil and Human Rights held on March 18, 2009. Des Moines University (DMU) served as host and the underwriting /presenting sponsor for this year's event.

The Symposium theme was *'Weathering the Storm: Preserving Human Rights in Tough Financial Times*. The annual event sponsored by Des Moines Human Rights Commission, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and Greater Des Moines Friends of Human Rights, Inc. has expanded from a single focus Fair Housing

conference to a comprehensive program on Civil and Human Rights while maintaining a focus on Fair Housing opportunities and challenges. With deepening housing and foreclosure issues facing the nation, the conference presentations were well attended and useful to those grappling with the housing struggle. This year's symposium was hosted by Des Moines University and keynoted by Stella Adams, an attorney and nationally-known housing advocate .

One hundred and forty-eight (148) individuals attended an opening event, three (3) workshop sessions, and a noon luncheon staffed by thirty-two (32) volunteer presenters on a wide-array of human rights issues including:

- Applying the Principles of Fair Housing in Rental Property Management
- Immigration 101: Understanding Current Rules & Regulations
- Straight Talk About LGBT Issues in the Workplace;
- Housing Market Decline & Foreclosures
- Competency Building for Human Rights Commissioners
- Fair Housing & Growing Homelessness: Facing the Challenges
- Housing Supports & Poor Economic Times: Resources Still Exist
- LGBTQA Students in Iowa
- Addressing Current Mandatory Life Sentences Without Parole for Youth Offenders Convicted of a Class A Felony before Age 18;
- Equal Work for Unequal Pay: Disparities Between Women & Men in the Iowa Workforce in 2009: The State of Comparable Worth in Iowa
- Health Care for All? Opportunities for the Underserved
- Implementing the 2008 Changes to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)
- LGBT Aging: Learn the Facts
- Housing & Hope for Tomorrow: stepping Into the Future

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK DURING THE SUMMER FLOOD

Just as the flood waters were threatening the City of Des Moines in mid-June, the Commission welcomed two (2) ten (10) week VISTA workers whose task it was to do targeted informational trainings for local neighborhood groups on Fair Housing. Like other city staff located in City Hall and the Armory, the DMHRC was flood-displaced to a single study room on the second (2nd) floor of the Downtown Public Library from which the Commission's work evolved for a six (6) week period. During the flood diaspora, work of the Commission continued as close to normal as possible.

Commission staff continued to take complaints during the flood. Cases were mediated in corners of the library. Call volume increased due to people seeking support in a time of lost housing caused by flooding. Staff continued to create and distribute public accommodation flyers & fair housing materials in the community and at summer events such as at the Annual Juneteenth Celebration held in Evelyn Davis Park and the Juneteenth Banquet at the Hotel Fort Des Moines. Some events were postponed but most of the Commission's work continued in a "reorganized fashion".

Des Moines Human Rights Commission

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EDNA GRIFFIN "SIT-IN" AT KATZ DRUGSTORE IN JULY

DMHRC mobilized the community to come together to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Edna Griffin's sit in at Katz Drug. In a partnership with Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC), DMHRC Director Simms, staff, commissioners and volunteers participated in the ceremony at the Grimes Building as the ICRC renamed their suite of offices for civil rights leader, Edna Griffin. The second event of the 60th Anniversary Celebration was a tribute to Edna Griffin held at the Fort Des Moines Museum where Edna's daughter- Phyllis (an infant at the time of the Katz Drug incident) spoke of the legacy and lessons learned from her mother.

Additionally, Des Moines Human Rights Commissioner, Ruth Ann Gaines and Des Moines artist, Maureen Korte presented a dramatic portrayal of Edna Griffin's work for racial justice in public accommodation.

MOVING THE DES MOINES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OFFICES FOR THE SECOND TIME IN A YEAR

The last year was very busy year for the DMHRC. Commission staff and volunteers did a lot of human rights work while also moving the DMHRC office's operation twice within a five (5) month period (once to the library & back for the flood and again right after the Thanksgiving holiday –a permanent move to the first (1st) floor of the Armory to accommodate space requirements for improved Information and Technology Services.

The second move involved sorting—with short notice-nineteen (19) years of accumulated records and possessions and moving them from the second (2nd) floor of the Armory to the first (1st) floor of the armory building within a five (5) day time period –both moves happening within a six (6) month period—and all done while continuing to operate as if no moving was taking place!

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

In December, the Commission again brought together people and organizations in the community to celebrate International Human Rights Day. This has become an annual celebration thru continued cooperation/collaboration with the Des Moines Public Library (DMPL) and the area's local human and civil rights organizations. These efforts truly exemplify the City Council's Goal Statement, "Des Moines will celebrate the rich diversity of our community by welcoming residents of all ages and cultures and encouraging their civic involvement".

The Year 2008 marked Sixtieth (60th) Anniversary of the signing of the International Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations and the Second (2nd) Annual Celebration of Human Rights Day held at the Downtown Des Moines

Public Library and sponsored by Greater Des Moines Friends of Human Rights. Programming included: 1) New York Artist, Terry Rosenberg, leading a dialogue with a panel of area human rights professionals/advocates on his digital art display *'The Colors of War and the Colors of Words*, 2) Author, Caryn West presenting her book, The Trouble With the Alphabet a pictorial story depicting children living with human rights abuses in the third world and including resource suggestions for action to improve the lives of children in war & impoverished settings, and 3) A musical oratory of the Declaration of Human Rights sung by the Des Moines Diversity Chorus. Local human and civil rights groups offered short presentations introducing their organizational mission and interpreting their display tables.

Thirty-eight (38) municipalities were invited to celebrate the 60th Anniversary in their community with a Human Rights Day proclamation. Human rights proclamations presented at the event represented Governor's Office (Syeta Glanton), City of Des Moines (Mayor, T.M. Franklin Cownie), and the cities of West Des Moines, Urbandale, and Polk City.

COMMISSION DIRECTOR IN THE COMMUNITY

The DMHRC Director: 1) Serves on the Des Moines Police Department's Office of Professional Services Review Team; 2) Provides training on diversity in the work place for the Regional Police Academy and other City of Des Moines Departments upon request; 3) Is an often an invited participant for community panels addressing race and ethnicity issues and frequently moderates community events. Moderated events this year have included the Juneteenth Banquet, the Iowa State University's Iowa African American Hall of Fame, a Drake University panel that addressed racial slurs in local sports reporting. Director Simms presents often on Civil/Human Rights and Fair Housing law.

CONCLUSION:

This has been a very good year for the Des Moines Human Rights Commission. Support for the work of the DMHRC has come from the members and staff of the Des Moines City Council; the office of Des Moines Mayor, Frank Cownie; The Des Moines City Clerk's Office; Greater Des Moines Friends of Human Rights; Iowa Civil Rights Commission; The Des Moines Public Library and the many community partners who support the Annual Symposium on Civil and Human Rights. Especially thanked in this regard are the leadership and staff at Des Moines University (DMU). Through the interest and increased participation of the human rights commissioners, and the collaborative support of other city departments, the cause of human rights in the Des Moines community has advanced.

Finally, Commission staff and volunteers rose to the occasion when office locations had to be moved twice in a short span of time. As with other city

departments adequate staffing remains a continuing challenge. Although VISTA volunteers are not charged to implement the professional tasks of the Human Rights professional staff, the opportunities provided by the time-limited VISTA grant staff demonstrated the potential of what a "fully staffed" commission could regularly accomplish.



¹ Mission: To advance justice and equality for all people in Des Moines.

² Vision: We attempt to foster equality for all people who live in or visit Des Moines creating an atmosphere of opportunity regardless of race, family status, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, disability or age."

³ Goals of the Commission: 1) To receive complaints of discrimination and complete investigations in a timely manner. 2) To attempt to resolve complaints thru mediation and conciliation prior to investigation. 3) To provide educational opportunities to the public, local companies, agencies and city departments about civil rights and diversity issues. 4) To involve community organizations, business, and citizens in the planning and delivery of human relations in the city of Des Moines.

Community Outreach



Guests at the June 20, 2009 Juneteenth Celebration stop by the Des Moines Human Rights Commission's table to test their Fair Housing knowledge. Event held at Evelyn Davis Park.



VISTA volunteer Jordan Homer smiles during the Fair Housing Information Blitz. During a three-day period in August, several volunteers distributed human rights literature and administered Fair Housing Quizzes to parents and students at school registrations at seven Des Moines Schools. In total, they reached over 200 people.



Summer VISTA Associate Patrick Choquette speaks with guests at the Back to School Health Fair held on July 15th, 2009.



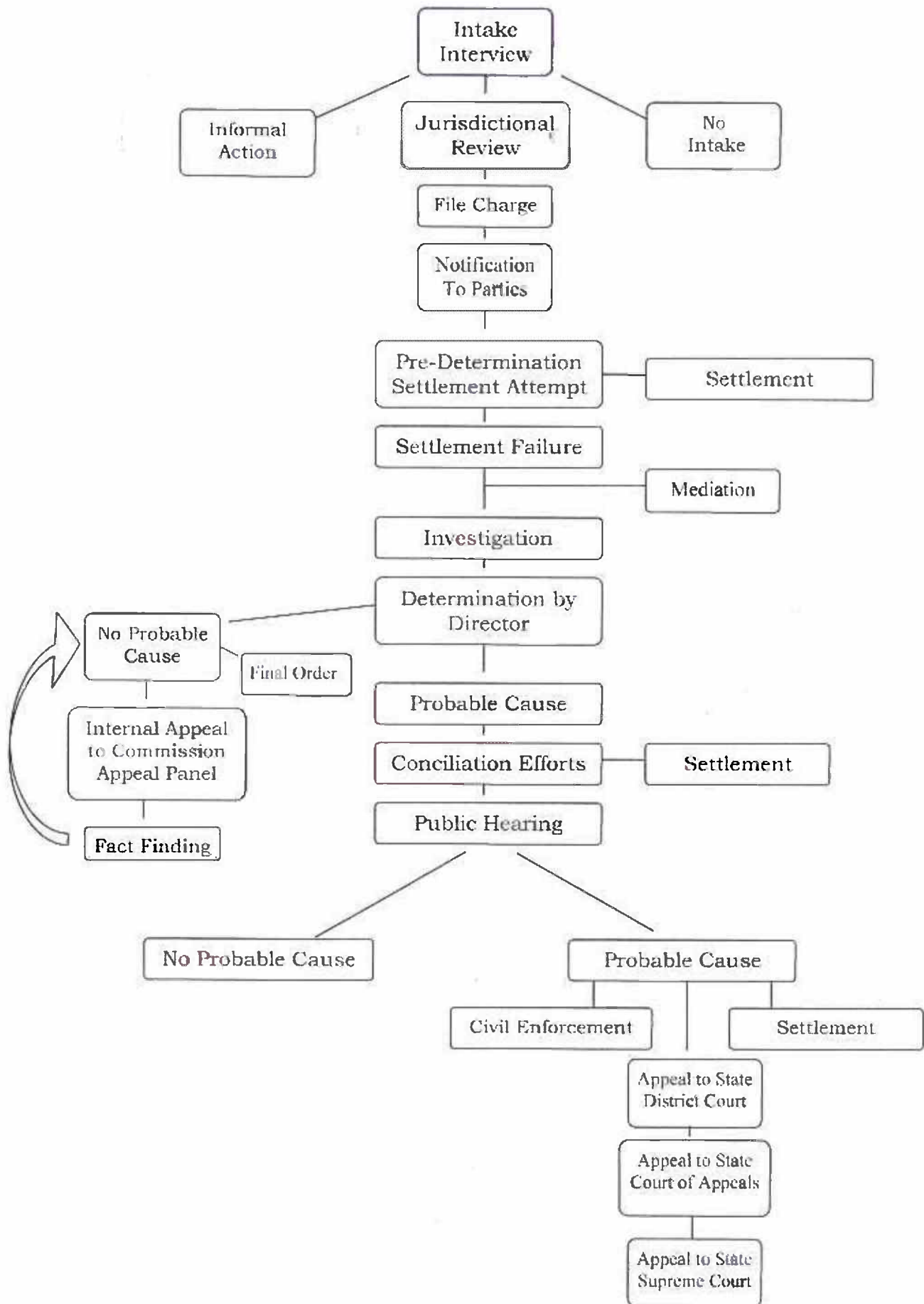
Commission Director Rudy Simms and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer Jordan Homer discuss the Commission's art projects at the Fair Housing Booth during January's Annual I'll Make Me A World in Iowa Celebration.



AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer Mikel Johnson staffs the Des Moines Human Rights Commission table at Juneteenth. At this event, the Commission reached over 55 people.

Des Moines Human Rights Commission

Complaint Process





THE CITY OF DES MOINES

Iowa's Capital City



Human Rights Department

- Human Rights Staff
- Commissioners
- Complaint Process
- Education and Training
- Human Rights Code
- Rules and Regulations
- Symposium and Events
- Publications
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Links

What We Do

The Human Rights Commission addresses illegal discrimination that occurs in the City of Des Moines in the areas of:

- Employment
- Housing
- Municipal Practices
- Public Accommodations

Des Moines Human Rights Commissioners



Nancy Bobo
Chair



Peggy Dancy
Vice Chair



Michelle Bailey
Secretary



Som Baccam



David E. Drake



Ruth Anne Gaines



Stuart Juarez

The Commission addresses illegal discrimination that occurs in the City of Des Moines in the areas of Employment, Housing, Municipal Practices, Public Accommodations.

- Establishment, Appointment, Composition, and Terms