

NCCJ, MCMR team up for community diversity project

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Council in partnership with the Detroit-based National Conference for Community and Justice will embark on a joint project Oct. 25-26 to deepen community dialogue on diversity.

That will involve a large group of community volunteers, who will commit to a year-long project. The agenda won't be up to NCCJ, said representative Dan Krichbaum. "Our council is looking for the community to tell us," said the Bingham Farms resident, who joined NCCJ in 1996.

"When you talk about the ideals of our country, basically, it has to do with a variety of groups learning how to work together. I think of Farmington as an All-American city because it has so many different groups. We haven't had many All-American cities where people have gotten along really well. I like an opportunity work with a community like that."

Before coming to NCCJ, Krichbaum, a minister, was the executive vice president for Channel 56 public television station.

He believes his present work at NCCJ is a better fit because it deals with late issues and focuses on people getting along better.

Krichbaum grew up in a small Ohio town and graduated with a bachelor arts degree in

sociology from Wooster College, 25 miles south of Cleveland. His Master of Divinity degree is from Columbia University, New York City.

He came to Detroit in 1967 and worked at several churches and as a campus minister at Oakland University. He worked as director of parks and recreation in Detroit for 16 years. Then he went to Channel 56 for three years.

"I've learned an awful lot from all those jobs," Krichbaum said. "In public television I learned a lot about communications. I learned a lot about fundraising."

The Michigan NCCJ chapter has 10 full-time people and five part-time people. Because the non-profit offers diversity and conflict resolution training, NCCJ decided to charge a fee for contract service. About two-thirds of the dollars come from an annual dinner and foundations around the metropolitan area.

Expenses
To keep expenses down, NCCJ hires trainers and consultants. "They might be a school guidance counselor, psychologist or they may be a professor at one of the universities around here," he said.

NCCJ does all of America's diversity work in Michigan. The group has also done work for the Detroit Medical Center.

Karen Bolsen, an MCMR co-chair with Jim Hall, will spend a year helping the community

come up with a plan. "It would help the project if the group had some resources," Krichbaum said.

Bolsen was chosen to be the point person for the project. MCMR is soliciting financial resources to do mailers and develop materials. The cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills and the Farmington Public School District contributed \$2,500 to get the project started. The first corporate donation, \$2,500, came from Computware. The group is waiting on a request of \$10,000 from the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan. The cost of Farmington's two-year project will be about \$50,000, Bolsen said.

Costs
About \$20-40,000 would be required for a part-time project administrator. Another \$5-10,000 is estimated for consulting fees or programming costs for the facilitation process.

Bolsen signed on to work on the planning portion. She acknowledged that she likely will be the part-time project administrator.

"We haven't signed a contract for that though," she said. "We are still developing the funding."

The contract would be between the two cities, the school district and Bolsen. "I've been doing this as a volunteer for seven years," Bolsen said. "I'll still be doing lots of volunteer work along with this project."

One project possibility is creating dialogue groups among congregations. "Part of our role is to train facilitators in these congregations so they could do that year after year," Krichbaum said. "We're not going to wait on the money from NCCJ's point of view."

He believes enough staff resources and resources from fundraising exist to proceed with the project to make the Farmington area a model for diversity in the metro-Detroit area.

Bolsen's group and the steering committee will develop some benchmarks to measure success, Krichbaum said. Asking good questions to find out what people are thinking is key, he added.

To volunteer for the committee which begins meeting at the Oct. 25-26 retreat at the Farmington Training Center, call the MCMR line at (248)436-4455 or Farmington Public Schools office (248)489-3339.

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Karen Bolsen and Dan Krichbaum

NCCJ sees unique opportunity

Because the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Council is already in place, the National Conference for Community and Justice can proceed more quickly in developing a model for diversity than in other cities.

'We have a unique community ... NCCJ wants to work with us.'

The organization was originally called the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

The Michigan chapter, formed in 1941, called itself the Interfaith Roundtable of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. It was formed by Henry Hitt Crane a prominent minister at Central Methodist Church at Woodward and Grand Circus Park in Detroit and Rabbi Leo Franklin of Temple Beth El at 14 Mile and Telegraph.

The idea came when the two were riding a train together, Krichbaum said. Their congregations weren't that far apart because Temple Beth El was on Woodward at the time.

The name change occurred in the 1980s, to represent a more inclusive philosophy. sueb02@home.com.net | (248) 477-5450

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