



Shaping Peace Together

Celebrating diversity and human rights by educating, raising awareness, and recognizing the value of all humanity

Phone: 208-292-2359 ■ P.O. Box 3281, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816 ■ www.HREI.org

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HREI launches Human Rights Consortium with Area Businesses

Coeur d'Alene – The Human Rights Education Institute, HREI, has been selected by a group of 12 area businesses and employers to coordinate a new Human Rights Consortium. The Consortium will help members tap into the existing expertise and successes of the Human Rights Education Institute with an aim of promoting human rights throughout our region.

The Consortium has three primary goals: issuing unified position statements as a collective voice to counter vocal pockets of racism and discrimination still present in our region; researching the needs of historically marginalized people in our community; and developing educational resources and training to help area organizations be better informed on human rights issues. The positive benefit will be an articulate, non-partisan coalition that develops recognition, respect, protection and implementation of human rights in northern Idaho.

“We learned that many local businesses were feeling the need to express support for human rights, yet in some instances did not feel they had the background to make a statement,” said Jeanette Laster, executive director of the Human Rights Education Institute. “This helped us see the opportunity to begin working together as a Human Rights Consortium.”

Members of the consortium will work together, each providing a unique perspective on the ways discrimination happens in their industries. Areas of focus will include health care, financial services, housing, education, and employment among others. Together, the consortium members, under the guidance of HREI, will examine ways in which all community members can begin to identify and correct potential areas of inequality. Consortium members will share responsibility to create a collective voice to address human rights issues, including racial and equity disparities.

“Human rights are an important issue to many physicians and health care professionals in our community,” said Jon Ness, CEO of Kootenai Health. “We understand the importance of providing health care that feels inclusive for everyone. The Human Rights Consortium will provide a foundation on which we can build a more culturally aware and inclusive community.”

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HREI will also take the lead on surveying available evidence-based research on human rights best practices. Research will be shared with Consortium members to enhance their understanding so they can create workplaces and a community in which all people feel truly safe and have the opportunity to participate, thrive and contribute to society.

“Our consortium members want to embrace diversity. They want to be inclusive and respectful. In some cases, they just need help understanding how to do that in a way that is meaningful and sustainable,” said Laster. “We are looking forward to doing this work together.”

“An important motivation for this work is a desire to move our business community and its employees from being bystanders to being upstanders,” Said Charles Buck, associate vice president and executive officer for University of Idaho, Coeur d'Alene. “A bystander says, ‘I’m not a minority; this isn’t my battle to fight.’ A bystander sees discrimination and walks on by. An upstander says, ‘I will stand up for what’s right. Even though I’m not personally impacted, I know it damages our community when we allow discrimination to continue.’ When upstanders see something wrong, they take the time to intervene. If we want a community of upstanders, it must start with community leaders.”

Initial members of the consortium include the following organizations: Avista Utilities, Engaging Team Concepts Consulting, Hagadone Corporation (publishing, hospitality, and marine), Heritage Health, Idaho Commission on Human Rights, Idaho State Police, Kootenai Health, Lewis and Clark State College Coeur d'Alene Center, North Idaho College, Northwest Specialty Hospital, University of Idaho Coeur d'Alene and the Human Rights Education Institute. Citizen and City Council member Dan English has also committed his time to participate and further Human Rights in North Idaho.

The Consortium is actively seeking additional business community members. If you are interested in learning more about the Human Rights Consortium, contact Jeanette Laster, executive director at JLaster@HREI.org or (208) 292-2359.

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About Human Rights Education Institute: *Founded in 1998, the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI), offers proactive educational programs that teach human rights, acceptance, respect for diversity, and cultural humility. Its programs, activities, and events seek to reduce racial prejudice and increase understanding of human rights in the Inland Northwest.*

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Headquartered in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, HREI hosts and creates world-class exhibits, develops programs for children, sponsors events celebrating diversity, and provides workshops and training for community members, business leaders and educators. HREI serves 55 school districts and more than 22,000 K-12 students annually.

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