

## AmeriCorps\*VISTA Progress Report

**Legal Applicant:** Iowa Civil Rights Commission  
**Address:** Grimes State Office Building 400 E.  
**City/State/Zip:** Des Moines IA 50319  
**Fax:** (515) 242-5840

**Project Name:** Iowa's Human and Civil Rights VISTA Project  
**Project Director:** Ralph Rosenberg  
**Telephone:** (515) 242-6537  
**Email:** ralph.rosenberg@iowa.gov

**Grant Number:** 06VSNI002

**Period Covered by this Report:**  
**From: 03/15/2009 to 09/30/2009**

### Data Updates

# of VISTA Members on board at end of reporting period	25
# of VISTA Members supported by cost share	5
# of Community Volunteers serving	496
# of Community Volunteers serving who are Baby Boomers	164
# of Service Hours performed by Community Volunteers	3530
Dollar value of cash resources developed by VISTA Members	35008
Dollar value of non-cash resources developed by VISTA Members	32847

### Member and Sponsor Development

	Americorps *VISTA Members	Supervisors	CNCS Funded	Funded by Other Source	Comments
On-Site Orientation	32		N	Y	
Community Outreach	10		Y	Y	
Community Volunteer Generation/Recruitment	6		Y	Y	
Effective Volunteer Management	6		N	Y	
Resource Mapping	2		N	Y	
Resource Development/Fundraising	6	1	N	Y	
Grant Writing	9	2	Y	Y	
Organizational Development	6	1	N	Y	
Performance Measures	5	1	N	Y	
Tracking Systems	5	1	N	Y	
Information Technology	7	2	N	Y	
Developing On-Site Orientations and Training Plans	3	2	Y	Y	
Other (Please Specify)	32	8	Y	Y	8 SO; VISTA: 13 legal, 1 social media, 1 public speaking, 7 fair housing, 10 civil rights history

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### Project Plan

Service Category: Other Education

#### Performance Milestone

##### Milestone

Summer Associates submit to the VISTA Leader(s) at least a group total of 5 educational and outreach resources and/or best practices addressing civil rights, diversity, anti-discrimination, hate crimes, fair housing, neighborhood safety, hate crimes, or anti-bullying that they research, adapt, build upon, or use.

##### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009

##### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2009

##### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

##### Target # (number) or % (percent)

5 #

##### Actual # or % to date

16

##### How Measured

Activity log

##### Description of Data Collection

The full-time ICRC VISTA members will report to the Project Director the number of resources and best practices that the Summer Associates submitted and were placed by the ICRC VISTA members on the website at the end of the summer.

##### Progress this Reporting Period

Each of Des Moines Human Rights Commission's four publications were translated into Bosnian and Vietnamese. VISTA members at DHR created two PowerPoint presentations to be used by DHR's various units. All participants at the Cedar Rapids Fair Housing Conference received a CD with presentations and publications. Other resources and best practices included several training guides, case checklist, handout for complainants, phone scripts, and two surveys. The ICRC VISTA members have posted some of these items on the League and VISTA websites, highlighting the items that can be duplicated and used by multiple agencies. A few items, such as the handout for complaints, are still being finalized by the sites and will be posted upon approval and submittal by the sites.

#### Performance Milestone

##### Milestone

At least 500 educational resources used by the local and state human and civil rights commissions will be distributed to at least 250 people at educational and outreach events across the state of Iowa and to any individual or group that requests the various resources.

##### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009

##### Actual Period of Accomplishment

May - Aug 2009

##### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

##### Target # (number) or % (percent)

500 #

##### Actual # or % to date

4081

##### How Measured

Activity log

##### Description of Data Collection

The VISTA Leader(s) will collect, analyze and report to the Project Director the overall numbers based on all the Summer Associates' activity and outreach reports.

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### Progress this Reporting Period

Ten Summer Associates distributed 4081 resources to 2257 people during their tenure. The largest events or activities included a 4th of July Celebration in Ames, youth fair housing efforts in Des Moines, a massive publicity drive in Cedar Rapids, and multiple service projects with youth in Dubuque. These figures do not include the State Fair, where a few Summer Associates joined year-round VISTA members in assisting with an educational booth.

### The community need statement

Discrimination continues to be an obstacle people face while trying to move out of and stay out of poverty.

### Goal Statement

Iowans will learn more about their civil rights and diversity and will know where to get help should they experience or witness discrimination.

**Service Category: Housing Referrals/Relocation/Other Housing Rela**

### The community need statement

A landlord who owns several hundred rental units in Sioux City filed for bankruptcy, resulting in massive foreclosures that have a disproportionate impact on low-income individuals and minorities, including a significant portion of an urban Native American population. Some tenants received evictions notices while others are waiting to hear about how they will be affected. Banks in the town have taken ownership of multiple units. One or more VISTA members based out of the Sioux City Human Rights Commission will work with the Siouland Homeless Coalition, city government, and multiple housing agencies to stabilize the housing crisis and to ensure that people impacted by the foreclosures can find affordable housing.

### Goal Statement

Residents in Sioux City impacted by the housing crisis will retain or secure adequate housing.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Sioux City residents will retain or secure adequate housing.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

March 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

March 2009 - Sept 2009

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

beneficiaries

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 #

#### Actual # or % to date

85

#### How Measured

Activity log

#### Description of Data Collection

VISTA members will report on a monthly basis to the VISTA Leader(s) the number of people who seek housing assistance, retain their housing, or secure adequate housing.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

This is an estimated number, as it is a combination of children and adults. Assistance provided by the VISTA

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members included referrals to and assisting with paperwork at the Siouxland Coalition to End Homelessness, working with the Sioux City Housing Initiative to get an apartment for a family, distribution of a 2-1-1 document to the tenants impacted by the Meyer bankruptcy, securing furniture donations, moving families, facilitating fair housing training for low income residents, and providing resources for tenants in need.

**Service Category: Training and Technical Assistance**

### Goal Statement

The goal of this expanded program is threefold. First, it is to strengthen local linkages, increase statewide networks and more effectively meet the needs of target communities. The second aspect of this project is to educate the public and stakeholder groups about their civil rights and how to report acts of discrimination in Iowa. The final part is to promote diversity within the state of Iowa.

### The community need statement

Despite current efforts by state and local human and civil rights agencies, most of the general public, particularly in the low-income community, do not know their civil rights in the areas of employment, public accommodation, housing, education and credit. Discrimination creates an additional barrier for people trying to move out of poverty.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

VISTA members will publish on the educational resource section of the League website at least 12 educational and outreach resources and best practices addressing civil rights, diversity, discrimination, hate crimes, or anti-bullying that they research, adapt, build upon, or use.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

March 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

March 09 - Sept 09

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

12 #

#### Actual # or % to date

4

#### How Measured

Activity log

#### Description of Data Collection

The VISTA members at ICRC will report to the Project Director the number of resources and best practices which will be published on the website every other month.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

The four best practices published include a Juneteenth playbook from Sioux City, the civil rights history quizzes used at the Iowa State Fair, the Fair Housing survey created by the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, and materials related to Fair Housing Public Forums hosted by the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. Upon final approval by sites, some of the best practices and resources created by the Summer Associates will be posted on the League website later this fall.

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### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

At least 6 of the members agencies of the League will continue to utilize the educational and outreach resources and best practices offered by the VISTA members.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

March 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

March 2009 - Sept 2009

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

On a regular basis an email or newsletter will be distributed to all League members listing the new resources and best practices used, adapted, created or discovered by VISTA members.

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

6 #

#### Actual # or % to date

16

#### How Measured

Activity log

#### Description of Data Collection

Besides using VISTA member's monthly reports, at the four quarterly League meetings the local commissions without local VISTA members will be asked if they have used any of the resources or best practices.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

All the local sites with VISTA members used resources their VISTA members created or adapted. In addition, one local commission used resources created for them by ICRC VISTA members.

Out of the evaluations from the March 17, 2009 League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies meeting, 9 people stated they had received service from the VISTA members over the last six months. Seven people ranked the effectiveness of the service in helping their organization increase public awareness of civil rights and diversity in their community as high, and two people ranked the effectiveness as some. One person added, "The VISTAs are great assets." For the components of the League meeting that VISTA members led or assisted with, participants rated the all the components as either good or excellent.

At the June 09 ICN League meeting, 7 people replied to the question about the effectiveness of the VISTAs' work in helping them increase public awareness of civil rights and diversity in their community. One person said no impact, 2 said some, and 4 said high. One individual commented, "The VISTA project is definitely one of the most helpful things that the ICRC has done for local commissions."

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

At least 10,000 educational resources created by the VISTA members will be distributed to at least to 5,000 people at educational and outreach events across the state of Iowa and to any individual or group that requests the various resources.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

March 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

March 2009 - Sept 2009

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

NA

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

10000 #

#### Actual # or % to date

20671

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### How Measured

Activity log

### Description of Data Collection

The VISTA Leader will collect, analyze and report, using VISTA members' monthly outreach reports, to the Project Director in October, March, and September.

### Progress this Reporting Period

The VISTA members attended 128 events during this time period, reaching 21,760 people and distributing 20,671 items.

Second half of March: 23 events, 2286 people, 2316 items

April: 18 events, 1862 people, 1965 items

May: 8 events, 222 people, 275 items

June: 13 events, 2492 people, 3029 items

July: 27 events, 1665 people, 1884 items

August\*: 14 events, 11171 people, 8653 items

September 25 events, 2062 people, 2549 items

\* Number of people reached was larger than people who received resources due to family members and friends who stopped by the State Fair booth and listened to the answers to the quizzes other people took.

**Service Category: Other Human Needs**

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

A minimum of 100 residents in the greater Postville area will receive assistance in securing food, shelter, health, light and water utilities, jobs, job interviews, and transportation or relocation to permanent residences and jobs..

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Sept 2009

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

March - Aug 2009

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 #

#### Actual # or % to date

1238

### How Measured

Activity log

### Description of Data Collection

VISTA members will report on a monthly basis to the VISTA Leader or Project Director the number of people who seek assistance at Turner Hall and the types of service they requested.

### Progress this Reporting Period

Confirmed numbers were 374 people in March, 322 in April, and 542 in May. Estimated numbers, which are not included in the actual number above, would be 300 in June, 250 in July, and 200 in August. Assistance provided ranged from utility assistance to travel vouchers and from groceries at the food pantry to children's activities.

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### The community need statement

A May 2008 immigration raid and shutdown, possibly permanent, of the primary employer in the city of Postville has created a humanitarian crisis. Over 600 individuals found themselves suddenly unemployed, most with families consisting of multiple children. Postville and surrounding communities in a 4 county area are facing loss of work, utilities being cut off, threats of eviction and even a lack of kosher food for the Hasidic Jewish population. This project will serve the low income and unemployed residents of the Northeast Iowa area, including Paluans, Latino immigrants, Jewish families, African refugees, US citizens from other communities who were brought to the area, and long term residents within a four county area. Business and suppliers also are being affected and may need assistance.

### Goal Statement

Through the VISTA Project, the residents of the Northeast Iowa area will secure adequate food, shelter, health, light and water utilities, and/or employment by the end of the third (current) year of this project.

**Service Category:** Legal Assistance

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Law students, serving as Summer Associates, will assist with the screening, mediation, investigation, and conciliation of 10 discrimination cases filed with state and local human and civil rights commissions.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

May - Aug 2009

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

10 #

#### Actual # or % to date

182

#### How Measured

Activity log

#### Description of Data Collection

Activity reports will be submitted to the VISTA Leader halfway through the summer and at the end of summer. The VISTA Leaders will then compile the results and report them to the Project Director.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

The five VISTA members at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission assisted with 85 cases (primarily during the screening phase), one VISTA member in Dubuque with 66 cases, one VISTA member in Davenport with 21, and two VISTA members in Sioux City with 10 complete investigations. The Summer Associates played a role in the intake, screening, information gathering, investigation plan, interviews, transcribing, investigation, mediation, reporting, and conciliation aspects of the 182 cases, sometime focusing on only one aspect and other times seeing the case through the whole process. In addition, many of the Summer Associates spent time conducting research and doing fair housing testing around the basis of disability.

### The community need statement

Despite current efforts by state and local human and civil rights agencies, most of the general public, particularly in the low-income community, do not know their civil rights in the areas of employment, public accommodation, housing, education and credit. Discrimination creates an additional barrier for people trying to move out of poverty.

### Goal Statement

The project will raise the community awareness of civil rights and eradicate discrimination in Iowa.

## Narratives

### Challenges

Challenges include increased demand by organizations to either join this project or to expand current number of members at local sites, growing pains due to rapid expansion, inconsistent supervision at some local sites (see multi-site performance), and retention of quality members (see sustainability). In the last six months our year-round program almost tripled in size and our summer associate program more than doubled in size from last year. As word got out about our brisk rate of growth and the opportunities and successes, more organizations now desire to join our program. Beyond the lack of slots, financial constraints hinder expansion and sustainability. Even with the additional one-time funding through the Recovery and Reinvestment Act, budget cuts at the state and local level threaten fulfillment of promises for cost-share funding and reduce available in-kind financial support.

An ongoing challenge deals with the increased levels of nationally required reporting. In looking back over our three years of existence, we initially did not have to submit so many reports, perhaps one every three to six months. This additional reporting methods consumes a large portion of time, leaving less time devoted to member development and support. The reporting process and the recruitment process would also go smoother if the CNCS released user manuals ahead of time and offered trainings before releasing major updates to eGrants.

Challenges experienced by local sites (in alphabetical order)

- \* Ames: The site re-located to the Parks and Recreation office after losing its office space at City Hall.
- \* Commission on Asian and Pacific Islanders (CAPI): Two refugee youth were hired to work at CAPI as summer interns, but required extensive supervision and assistance developing online blogging projects. This work fell on the VISTA Summer Associate who had to overcome language barriers and computer/technical challenges daily in order to help the refugee youth get the most out of their internship experience.
- \* Cultural Affairs: The History Through the Arts struggles from a lack of funding. More of the VISTA member's time now deals with resource development and grant writing than originally expected, which lessens the time she can devote to volunteer recruitment/management and program development.
- \* Davenport: The previous VISTA member faced barriers to locating appropriate grants for the agency and/or projects because of the commission's status as a municipal entity.
- \* Des Moines: The biggest challenge facing the VISTA members remains volunteer recruitment. The VISTA members oversee the extensive outreach efforts of the commission, but often find themselves having to attend every event.
- \* Dubuque: The Multicultural Family Center relocated during several members' tenure.
- \* Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC): Major budget cuts at the state government level impacted the VISTA members' ability to attend as many outreach events as desired and implement innovative ideas, such as an overhaul of the agency's website. In addition, the economic crisis resulted in a decrease in sponsorships for the Iowa State Fair booth. The State Fair, the commission's largest annual outreach project, had to downsize marketing, public relations, and education materials due to fewer resources.
- \* Iowa Department of Aging: Through his stakeholder survey, the VISTA member discovered that there is little outreach being done across the state in terms of dependent adult abuse. As a result, he finds himself having to create outreach campaigns from scratch and surveying stakeholders on what type of general outreach they have found to work in their communities.
- \* Native American Affairs: The main challenge deals with a lack of resources (manpower, funding, website, etc.). The VISTA members are not faced with lack of public interest, but rather the inability to provide the public with educational opportunity. The Iowa Commission on Native American Affairs formed less than a year ago; has no staff; and experiences growing pains as the commissioners, who represent a variety of different nations, learn to work together and find a common mission and vision.
- \* Postville: While able to reach hundreds of people and a unique way for state government to assist the four county region served by the site, the program in Postville struggled from personnel conflicts, too many local supervisors, and ongoing miscommunication in the city.
- \* Sioux City: As an organization, the Sioux City Human Rights Commission has had great challenges with an overwhelming caseload. Whereas the VISTA members have taken on responsibilities for event planning, it has done little to reduce the backlog of cases. Hopefully the newest VISTA member will be able to address these problems as she searches for local lawyers to volunteer regarding pro bono cases. Another major challenge involved power struggles, communication breakdowns, and shifting of responsibilities at the Midtown Family Community Center, which resulted in the Sioux City Commission pulling out of the project to protect its VISTA members from being taken advantage of, despite all the wonderful work Renae had accomplished during her first year of service.
- \* Statewide Service Projects: Time constraints and response rates (from volunteers and members around the state) made efforts difficult. The September 11th project and volunteer recruitment effort faced a crunched deadline and timeframe. The 30 day

## Narratives

turn-over for the event caused a few details to fall through the cracks and left volunteers and staff both feeling rushed and that they were unable to do as good of a job as they wanted.

\* Status of African Americans: The VISTA member left prematurely due to a family emergency and the good work that she started came to an end.

### Recruitment

We continue to connect with new organizations and individuals during our recruitment periods. When recruiting for summer associates who would assist with discrimination investigations, we contacted law schools in the Midwest, which resulted in law students filling over 40% of our summer associate positions.

Learning from past experiences, we offered multiple conference call trainings and sent out more frequent email updates to all local sites interested in securing VISTA members. We stressed the importance of finding quality candidates, not just anyone to fill the open positions. We provided local sites with a complete list of the places where we posted the VISTA opportunities, copies of recruitment newsletters and flyers, and suggestions of ways that they could advertise in their communities. We shifted more responsibility for recruitment to the local sites and stressed the importance of taking the time to find quality candidates. Part of the rush tendency stemmed from the reality that we had more organizations wanting VISTA members than we could accommodate. We explained our priority policy gave preference to those offering larger financial contributions to off-set our total cost-share expenses. We also gave preference to local commissions who we had been working with to receive their first VISTA member. Press releases submitted by local sites received better publicity. Due to Sioux City's current VISTA members' strong connection with their local media, we received a nice tailored article for the Sioux City positions.

Time deadlines also added to the burden of recruitment. Some agencies desiring one or more VISTA members experienced frustration and tension when one or two slots opened up at the last minute, but their top choices had either taken a different position by then or could not be reached within the 24 hour period granted to fill those extra slots.

Sioux City: VISTA members spread the word about VISTA openings using the internet. They added a section to their website with job details. They posted the job description on social networking sites such as Craigslist, Facebook and Twitter. They posted listings on at least five different college/university's online career services for students (this is where Libby became aware of them). They also spread the word personally. Shelby announced an opening at a monthly NAACP meeting. An active member then promptly recruited Ike just hours before the deadline.

### Training/Technical Assistance Needs

We would like the following assistance: user manuals and training provided in advance of major updates or changes to eGrants or reporting processes; better instructions and streamlining of reporting and maintenance of S&T grants; advance grant writing training; and informational technology development and management.

### Partnership/Collaboration Development

\* Ames: The VISTA members developed and maintained partnerships with various city departments, Volunteer Center of Story County, ISU Extension Services, Youth & Shelter Services, Iowa Resource for International Service, Boys & Girls Club of Ames, 4-H Club of Ames, Delta Academy, ACCESS Women's Shelter, Ames faith community, Everyday Democracy, and Department of Justice Community Relations Service.

\* CAPI: Meetings were held with various governmental and non-profit organizations in order to collaborate and increase the efficacy of both organizations. Specifically, meetings were held with Senator Jeff Danielson and Xiaomin, an intern, from the Department of Natural Resources to discuss issues regarding language/cultural barriers within the API community concerning the conservation of the environment; Raeshma Razvi, a refugee youth document project organizer, in order to discuss ideas for CAPI's refugee youth project; and finally Shelly Horak from MECCA about gambling prevention in API communities and a possible social marketing campaign.

\* Council Bluffs: Collaborations for outreach activities included Council Bluffs Community Alliance, OneIowa, New Iowan Center, and Iowa Realtors.

\* Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP): The VISTA member has been working with the Boone Rural Homeless Youth Project as well as with the Boone Homeless prevention board to minimize homelessness, to make resources better known, and to get the work out to the community.

\* Cultural Affairs: The program maintains partnerships with many organizations across the state of Iowa and nation, ranging from school districts to artists and from theater groups to museums. Developing and maintaining is one of the program's strong points.

## Narratives

- \* Davenport: They collaborated with United Neighbors for the Herb Block Foundation Grant and worked with community organizations for outreach events.
- \* Des Moines: The VISTA members partnered with many different agencies throughout the city through their fair housing outreach efforts. The connections built with the Des Moines Public Schools continue to expand and result in new collaborations and projects. The commission worked with Des Moines University for the commission's annual fair housing symposium.
- \* Dubuque: They continued partnerships with the Multicultural Family Center, NAACP, local community leaders, Crescent Community Health Center, Dubuque Community School District, Project HOPE, and the Dubuque Community Foundation.
- \* Iowa Civil Rights Commission: Collaborations included Iowa Pride Network (conferences, outreach, Safe Schools coalition, grant), Disabilities Council, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (State Fair and presentations), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (fair housing forum), over 20 local human and civil rights agencies, Iowa Department of Human Rights and most of its agencies, State Historical Building, Central Iowa Society for Human Resource Management, State Fair Planning Committee, State Record Center, OneIowa, Central Iowa Red Cross, State of Iowa Government (Shattering Silence event); Capital City Pride, League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies; Central College, Orchard Place, Lutheran Services in Iowa, Iowa Immigration Education Coalition, American Service Friends Committee, Iowa National Guard, DMACC, Iowa Department of Education, Eychaner Foundation, Iowa Safe Schools Task Force, city government officials in Perry, Greater Des Moines Partnership, Youth & Shelter Services, public libraries across the state, Latino Heritage Festival planners, Iowa Protection and Advocacy, University of Iowa Center for Human Rights, eTapestry, Iowa Council on International Understanding, National Lesbian and Gay Task Force (shelter policies dealing with transgendered individuals), Iowa Workforce Development, and City of Marshalltown Housing and Community Development.
- \* Iowa Department on Aging: Partnerships were built with Heritage Area Agency on Aging (event commemorating the Olmstead Supreme Court decision, elder care event), Central Iowa Center for Independent Living (event commemorating the passing of the American with Disabilities Act), University of Iowa, Disabilities Council, Governor's Task Force on Adults with Mental Retardation, Iowa Workforce Development (benefits liaison training), Warren County Board of Supervisors (outreach campaign pilot program).
- \* Iowa Immigration Education Coalition (IIEC): The VISTA worked with numerous non-profits, government agencies, and corporate sponsors.
- \* Latino Affairs: They collaborated with Women of Color Advisory Network, Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Central Iowa Diversity Committee, Latino Service Providers Coalition, West Des Moines schools (Spanish Quiz Bowl), Iowa Civil Rights Commissioners and community members (State Fair volunteering), Commission on Latino Affairs (commission meetings, Latino Heritage Festival), La Clinica de la Esperanza (interpreted at a back to school clinic), HOLA Center (interpreted at legal clinic), One Iowa/I'm for Iowa (attended Dolores Huerta lunch and presentation), Iowa Youth Congress sponsors (Veridian Credit Union and Bankers Trust), CAPI (attended commission meeting to get help recruiting Iowa Youth Congress participants), US Census Bureau and Latino community, United Way Visiting Nurses Services, September 11 Call to Service book drive, Iowa Against Human Trafficking Committee, and Latino/a Conference Hecho en Iowa.
- \* Native American Affairs: They built partnerships with Magellan Health of Iowa, Department of Public Health, and Department of Corrections.
- \* Postville: Partnerships existed with the faith community, Lutheran Services in Iowa (Camp Noah), local government officials, state government agencies, Northeast Iowa Food Bank, Allamakee New Beginnings (housing rehabilitation), Jewish boys' school, Community Action Agency, Iowa Legal Aid, Postville Response Coalition, and Archdiocese of Dubuque (personal stories project).
- \* Sioux City: VISTA members developed a strong collaborative relationship with the NAACP beginning for the co-sponsored Juneteenth event. They had a stakeholder meeting in which they asked the president what events she would like to see in the area. She suggested a Juneteenth event. Austin Granzow took on the task and was the primary coordinator. He planned it with copious amount of help from NAACP members and Shelby Pierce. There is now a great deal of support to make this an annual event. Since then the VISTA members have become members of the local chapter of the NAACP. They have sat in on meetings regarding an initiative to close the achievement gap in the schools. Renae Hohensee is currently planning another co-sponsored event--a facilitated public discussion on racism.
- \* Statewide Service Projects: Many of the sites the VISTA member got in contact with for September 11th are very interested in participating on MLK Day. In addition, she has stayed in contact with many of the sites that participated in the past to continue to foster that relationship.
- \* Status of African Americans: They now have a closer relationship with students from Drake University; in fact, they are involved with an upcoming conference on race as a result of the relationship-building that was developed by the VISTA worker.
- \* University of Iowa: The University of Iowa Center for Human Rights has worked with the Iowa City Human Rights

## Narratives

Commission, UI Public Policy Center, UI Interdisciplinary Health Group, Iowa Immigration Education Coalition, UI Residence Life Department, UI Disability Network, and Shelter House (local community non-profit).

### Resource Development

#### Resource Development

- \* Ames: Almost 60 community volunteers provided 650 hours of service, most of whom started volunteering prior to VISTA involvement. Continuous efforts have been and will be made to increase participation through outreach events, social media, and word of mouth. The VISTA members created three websites and two logos. The VISTA members assisted with the purchase and now utilize the Street'N'Greet Block Party Trailer. The site raised \$12,500 in cash donations (\$5,000 from the City of Ames) and \$2,500 in in-kind donations.
- \* CAPI: A major project for summer 2009 was outreach to prepare for the upcoming Census 2010. Recruitment efforts for this project included: contacting local community members in order to develop a comprehensive contact list; organizing a meeting with API community leaders on the importance of the Census and drafting a letter to recruit community members to attend the meeting; and researching, preparing, and giving a presentation at the meeting on the importance of Census participation for the API community. This presentation was also given at a Tero leadership workshop. Resources created included a community contact list and a power point presentation on the importance of Census 2010 participation. CAPI, Criminal and Juvenile Justice, and Latino Affairs collectively relied on 9 volunteers who contributed 76 hours of service and raised \$500 in in-kind donations.
- \* CJJP: They developed and updated the new ICYD youth website and monthly newsletter. They have also created a contact list for the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) recruitment efforts and for the Boone community. Lastly, a brochure was created for SIYAC.
- \* Council Bluffs: They had several outreach efforts and distributed materials at two sexual harassment trainings provided for the Catholic Diocese including Council Bluffs. They also distributed materials at an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission training on workplace discrimination and Latino immigrants. The commission had a booth and distributed materials about Fair Housing at the Iowa Realtors ® Convention. The VISTA member developed brochures in English and Spanish. Complaint forms are now online in Spanish. She secured a new, more marketable website url, made the website more attractive, and added photos and outreach information to the website. A prominent bulletin board in city hall has been redone to provide more information and capture attention. 38 volunteers contributed 209 hours of volunteer service, most of which involved the Paint-a-Thon.
- \* Cultural Affairs: The VISTA member created manuals for teachers, volunteers, and facilitators; a new invoicing system; a standard grant form; and a sponsorship packet. The sixty volunteers contributed 390 hours of service. The VISTA member secured \$7150 in cash donations and \$12,265 in in-kind donations.
- \* Davenport: The VISTA members conducted research for grants to fund commission projects; updated the commissioner manual; made follow-up calls for Fair Housing Month poster contest to local school districts; updated, printed, and delivered Fair Housing posters to local businesses; produced and distributed a spring newsletter; and emailed the 2008 Annual Report to local service organizations.
- \* Des Moines: The VISTA members published and distributed a number of new pamphlets, quizzes and FAQ handouts. The VISTA members recruited thirty volunteers for a testing project and another dozen to serve as fair housing trainers, including a number of youth. Jordan established a Twitter account and runs the commission's Facebook page while Mikel continues to work on revamping the commission's website. For their different educational and outreach events, the VISTA members secured 50 posted printed at no cost through Allegra's Footprint Fund; \$25 off of two tickets to Adventureland which were used as prizes for a contest; use of a jigsaw for a week at no cost; \$5575 in cash donations for the fair housing symposium; use of extensive facility space, free parking and sixty-three volunteer hours by staff from Des Moines University for the symposium; twenty-four speakers who donated their time for the symposium; and free publicity spots for the symposium on KCCI-TV (with a viewing audience of 651,000 people in Central Iowa) shown for a month.
- \* Dubuque: The VISTA members oversaw volunteer recruitment at local colleges and at the Multicultural Family Center (MFC) grand opening; attended the City Expo, Youth Coalition Meetings, North End Neighborhood Resource Fair; created brochures regarding gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination; built a MFC-specific grant database; published power points regarding MFC programs; created a case checklist for use in the Dubuque Human Rights Department; and developed informational handout regarding legal terminology and discrimination cases. The VISTA members secured \$500 in in-donations and recruited 16 volunteers who provided a total of 475 volunteer hours.
- \* ICRC: The VISTA members updated multiple websites; created a blog; constructed and oversaw multiple surveys; collected donations for the Iowa State Fair; provided 3 weeks of presentations for youth at the State Historical Building; created recruitment newsletters and flyers; updated the State Commissioner manual; and updated the commission's master press release list. For their agency's annual State Fair booth, the VISTA members recruited 50 volunteers who staffed the booth for a total of

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150 hours and raised \$3,733 for giveaways and related expenses.

\* Iowa Department on Aging: Through Nick Yannias' survey of stakeholder groups in Iowa, organizations have begun expressing interest in collaborating with the department for its outreach efforts.

\* Iowa Immigration Education Coalition: Twenty volunteers provided 50 hours of service to the coalition.

\* Latino Affairs: The VISTA members created Iowa Youth Congress letters and forms, learning activities for Latino Heritage Festival, a Statewide Directory of Services, and multiple Iowa Division of Latino Affairs e-newsletters. They also updated both the Iowa Youth Congress and Iowa Division of Latino Affairs websites.

\* Native American Affairs: They had their first "The Battle for Whiteclay" event and had an amazing turnout through their recruiting efforts to substance abuse/social work professionals, professors, and students. They are working with Magellan Health of Iowa and the Iowa Department of Public Health in order to secure a \$3000 donation to help fund public outreach projects such as "The Battle for Whiteclay" and Coffee Talks. So far they have raised \$300 for the commission.

\* Sioux City: Austin worked to develop resources for the inaugural Juneteenth event. The VISTA members were able to elicit a \$500.00 matching contribution from the NAACP. They also raised \$225.00 for the event from individual private donors. Counting the \$725 for the Juneteenth event, the VISTA members secured \$5750 in cash donations and \$4971 in in-kind donations. Some of the resources went to projects of the Midtown Family Community Center and for housing relief work.

\* Statewide Service Projects: They received 1,697 books (including 400 books from Scholastic Book Fairs) for the September 11th book drive which went to benefit 18 community organizations focusing on child literacy, homelessness, domestic violence, and refugee services. In addition, many of the books went to Everybody Wins! Iowa to help replenish the reading material at their 12 partner schools as well as their school project in Africa. Three-five people provided 185 hours of service.

\* Status of African Americans: Mairin did a good job recruiting others to assist with various activities. She recruited seven people who helped her with the planning and implementation of some of the activities at Drake University, resulting in 20 hours of volunteer service. A blog was developed that enhanced the commission's website and website traffic.

\* University of Iowa: The site received a Department of Justice Grant to establish outreach to immigrant communities in the Midwest.

## Sustainability

We require all sites to provide financial assistance to help cover cost-share positions and assist with reimbursement for expenses incurred by the sites' individual VISTA members. We do have concern about sustainability for positions funded by the Recovery and Reinvestment Act due to the one-time boost in funding and the decrease in slots for the upcoming fiscal year. To begin addressing this issue, we made strategic decisions about the November 2009 candidates by recruiting people with skills that would allow them to work for multiple agencies. We prioritized local sites that contributed the largest amounts of money. Three of our members re-enrolled for a second year and our VISTA Leader re-enrolled for a third year, thus allowing for continuity at different sites and give sites the opportunity to train new VISTA members by shadowing ones that have served at the site for an extended period of time.

As more sites join the VISTA Project and benefit from the services of VISTA members, local commissions highlight their VISTA members' accomplishments during League meetings and VISTA supervisor conference calls. There is a growing sense of ownership and an expanding sense of energy. As a result, the best practices and resources shared among the League of Iowa Human Rights member agencies continues to increase both in terms of numbers and frequency. One person wrote in an evaluation following the June 2009 League meeting, "The VISTA Project is definitely one of the most helpful things that the ICRC has done for local commissions."

Sustainability efforts by local sites

\* Ames: Sustainability projects include the start of applying for nonprofit status by becoming incorporated, creating bylaws, and building a board; helping coordinate successful projects with high volunteer involvement; creating various community partnerships with city agencies, local NPOs, and social service organizations; building the visibility of group with rebranding initiatives (logo design, renaming of group, restructuring group as incorporated); and applying for grants to allow group to be self-sustained.

\* CAPI: Arrangements have been made for the various projects to be carried on after the VISTA's departure by both CAPI staff and community partners. The responsibilities of Census 2010 outreach and promotion have shifted more and more to specific API community leaders. The comprehensive contact database is a valuable resource for mobilizing Iowa's API community and will be maintained by CAPI staff. The Refugee Youth Empowerment Project piloted during the summer of 2009 will be maintained through a partnership that is currently being developed between CAPI and Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Central Iowa.

\* CJJP: Amy created a template for the newsletter for easy continuity. The community and group contact lists have been put

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into excel files in order to allow multiple people to upload them onto their computers.

\* Council Bluffs: Sarah researched possible grant funding from Iowa West Foundation.

\* Cultural Affairs: Mandie continues writing grants/sponsorships for current and future programming; forming partnerships with organizations that provide in-kind resources; forming partnerships with organizations that provide volunteers, artists, or facilitators; making databases of contacts; and planning for the next theater season.

\* Davenport: Sustainability efforts by the VISTA members include creation of a welcome packet for next VISTA, conducting research for grants for funding commission projects, creating a database of grant funding sources and status of grant applications, and creating of list of outside contacts for programming.

\* Des Moines: Both Jordan and Mikel are engaged in rebuilding stable infrastructure and support systems which will remain after they leave VISTA service. At this point they both remain in service to the DMHRC. Additionally, they have built templates and logic models which can be used in the future to support the work of the commission. The VISTA project with the Human Rights Commission is entering its third year and has been responsible for infrastructure improvements which are assisting the DMHRC in serving the community through greater use of media and technology. Also involved in these improvements was Bridget Fischels, who concentrated on the initial redesign of DMHRC materials.

\* Dubuque: Current VISTA is working on creating a grant database specific to the MFC's programming priorities and is creating a sustainable website and internet presence.

\* ICRC: Anna, Geof, and Adam created binders for the past few year's Iowa State Fair booths. Geof and Adam started sustainability packets for projects they currently oversee so that the next group of VISTA members or current ICRC staff can continue the projects.

\* IIEC: Geof developed an orientation manual to help with smooth transition for the next VISTA and will train the next person on all the different programs used by the coalition.

\* Latino Affairs: Heather and Carolina created detailed spreadsheets with updated Iowa Youth Congress school contacts and have begun creation of an Iowa Statewide Directory.

\* Native American Affairs: Molly and Jay are working on establishing relationships with community organizations and groups. They are also creating databases of contacts and project tips/ideas/etc.

\* Sioux City: Austin is currently working to streamline the event process for annual events. He worked designed our Juneteenth event from scratch. He kept meticulous notes at every step of the process and compiled all the relevant information into both physical and electronic playbooks.

\* Statewide Service Projects: Molly continues to maintain relationships with past and current community organizations and members and established databases of contacts and project tips.

\* University of Iowa: The UICHR staff initiated discussions with other campus entities (i.e. departments and programs) in order to help carry on some of the work after the VISTA departs. This planning and these conversations are ongoing.

## Multi-Site Performance

With the rapid growth of the program, we began holding monthly conference calls for all VISTA members and bi-monthly conference calls for local supervisors. Calls provide opportunities to share updates about the program, explain changes in terms of policies and procedures, and give local sites a forum for sharing ideas, questions, and concerns. In September, we began the creation of VISTA newsletters as another way to help members and supervisors feel better connected, particularly for VISTA members who do not have other VISTA members in their geographical proximity.

One challenge, as a multi-site project that encompasses a large geographic area, deals with local supervisors not providing sufficient guidance or lack of vision for their members' work. To address this problem, we increased the number of trainings we provide for the supervisors, offer the bi-monthly conference calls, and require all sites to send someone to a Supervisor Orientation.

## Other Accomplishments

Through a combination of publicity about some of our local sites (particularly the humanitarian relief provided in Postville and Sioux City) and the rapid growth of the program, we increased our visibility. We have become a resource for other agencies that either have or would like VISTA members. We received notification that the Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project is one of six Midwest finalists for an innovations in government award from the Council of State Governments. Recognition of our program through the Council of State Governments coupled with presentations about the program during regional and national conferences of civil rights agencies has peaked interest by other states or leagues of local civil and human rights agencies to consider replication of our program.

Listening to the feedback from our past and current members, we offered an in-person day-long orientation in the summer for

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incoming members. This allowed us a chance to bring on board a large number of people at the same time and walk people through some of the more confusing state government policies and procedures that have been obstacles in the past. We conducted a survey of all our current members to get an assessment of the program. Over eighty percent of the members responded, providing us with honest feedback about what is working and how we can make improvements to the program. We have implemented a number of the suggestions, including holding monthly conference calls and providing more frequent updates about what types of activities all the different VISTA members are working on at the moment.

Our Summer Associates program exceeded our expectations as we found ourselves blessed with a wonderful group of fifteen dedicated individuals. We decided to experiment with having half of our summer associates assist with the screening and investigation of discrimination cases. These associates worked on over seventy-five cases, which dramatically decreased backlogs at ICRC and several local commissions. Others summer associates conducted surveys, created new publications, wrote fair housing curriculum, build connections with new stakeholder groups, and facilitated neighborhood block parties devoted to celebrating diversity within communities.

A sample of other accomplishments by our sites:

- \* Ames: The VISTA members created AmeZone (youth service learning group) and conducted a successful outreach of 1200 people for 4th of July Pancake Breakfast (offering nametags, community information, and city brochures to new and seasoned members of the Ames community).
- \* CAPI: The VISTA Summer Associate participated as a panelist at a "World of Differences" meeting to around 30 youth, speaking about her experiences growing up as an Asian-American.
- \* Council Bluffs. The commission oversaw a Paint-a-Thon project. The commission adopted a house in Council Bluffs to scrape, prime, caulk, and paint. It assessed work, recruited volunteers, and painted the house. This also served as an outreach opportunity because the Commission partnered with the City of Council Bluffs and the Council Bluffs Community Alliance in volunteer generation. This project began before VISTA assistance at the site through the VISTA member helped with the conclusion of the project. She made records of the process and volunteers this year and will head the project next year, eventually making more detailed notes on donors, sources of expert assistance, volunteers, and challenges. This will make it easier for the Commission to sustain this effort long-term.
- \* Cultural Affairs: The VISTA member is working on promoting and planning travel of Abraham Lincoln exhibit that will be presented with Young Abe Lincoln play; working on Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon opening day events; planning and programming to implement blog about programming; working with non-VISTA interns; working on WWII veteran interviews to be used for a performance in an upcoming season; and working with volunteers and part-time staff.
- \* Davenport: The VISTA member submitted a letter of inquiry to the Herb Block Foundation; attended a job fair at Kaplan University; and created another opportunity to attend the Community Agency Fair.
- \* ICRC: In order to gain insight into the status of housing discrimination in Iowa, the ICRC VISTAs collaborated with local city officials and civil/human rights commissioners in four communities to organize fair housing forums. VISTAs secured public locations to host the events, as well as sent out press releases and spoke with local media. During the forums, VISTAs encouraged citizens to speak about the impediments to fair housing they experience, as well as address what the community can do to prevent this type of discrimination. The VISTAs then included the important stories and ideas gathered at the four forums in the fair housing impediments study that the ICRC was conducting. VISTAs also collected information on housing discrimination in Iowa by creating a housing impediments survey that was distributed across the state of Iowa. The survey asked participants if they thought housing discrimination still occurs in Iowa, what types of people are victimized, and why these behaviors and attitudes exist. The responses from 137 people were summarized and included in the housing impediments study.
- \* ICRC: The 2009 Iowa State Fair booth was a great opportunity for VISTAs and dozens of volunteers to distribute civil rights information to the public. To prepare for the fair, the ICRC VISTAs headed a state fair planning committee, selected and ordered giveaways/prizes, created a civil rights t-shirt design, coordinated logistics, and maintained a volunteer database of over 80 volunteers. During the fair, VISTAs led volunteers in distributing youth and adult civil rights quizzes to fair goers. Depending on how well the people knew their Iowa civil rights history, they were awarded various prizes. We were able to reach over 10,000 people through the quizzes, distributing brochures on civil rights, and answering visitors' questions. By staffing a booth at the state fair, and reaching people who normally would not attend civil rights/diversity events, we were able to elevate the status of civil rights in Iowa.
- \* Status of African Americans: The VISTA member planned and coordinated several Lunch and Learns: one dealing with State Employees and State Hiring Practices (45 people), one on Health Care Disparities (10 people), one on Educational Disparities (15 people), and one on the Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans (25 people at Drake).
- \* University of Iowa: The VISTA member helped managed a staff of seven UICHR interns, organized a Healthcare Forum,

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helped organize Know Your Rights training program for community members and students, helped advertise the UICHR's Careers for Change Speakers Series, co-authors the weekly newsletters from the UICHR, organized the beginning of the year picnic for UICHR, conducts continuous research on immigration trends and demographics in the state of Iowa, and gathered feedback for a proposed Speakers Bureau.

## Stories

\* Abraham Funchess, local site supervisor for the Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans: "Mairin's presence and conversation in the department challenged, in a healthy way, department personnel to think critically about the Iowa Supreme Court's decision regarding marriage equality and the LGBT community, and issues of discrimination and exclusion. I believe she enhanced our human and civil rights outlook with respect to the LGBT population in our state, which allowed us to rethink and explore new ways of thinking about justice and love."

\* Adam Cotton, Ames VISTA: "The Street'N'Greet block party trailer was fundraised for, purchased and introduced to the community this summer. The first block party took place on Tripp Street which is part of a neighborhood know for its socio-economically and racially diverse residents. With over 200 people in attendance, two police officers on segways, and a fire engine, rescue vehicle and staff for children to interact with, this event allowed for relationship building between apartment renters and house owners, and neighborhood residents and City police and fire staff. Without the organization of VISTA, this event would not have occurred."

\* Austin Granzow, Sioux City VISTA: "I think our organization has been fairly well represented in the media. We have had local news articles announcing nearly every, if not every, event we have put on since I have become a VISTA. We have been interviewed on television numerous times about our activities. We also have a more active web presence. For example, the week preceding our Juneteenth event if you googled the term "Sioux City Juneteenth" nine of the first ten results had information about the time and place of the event. We also have background information on our website for every event we put on in one easy to access place."

## Attachments and Links

Attachments: <http://iowavistaproject.webs.com/october2009.htm>

Photos: <http://iowavistaproject.webs.com/apps/photos/>

Publicity: <http://iowavistaproject.webs.com/apps/links/>

## Websites and Social Media

\* Ames Community Conversations on Diversity website: <http://sites.google.com/site/amescommunityconversations/>

\* Ames Community Conversations on Diversity Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1444534756>

\* Ames Conversations Facebook profile: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/unitedames>

\* Ames Street'N'Greet website: <http://www.unitedames.webs.com>

\* Ames Street'N'Greet Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=88913574577>

\* AmeZone website: [www.amezone.webs.com](http://www.amezone.webs.com)

\* CAPI's Youth Refugee blogs: <http://www.farahhashim.blogspot.com/> and <http://khadkanabin.blogspot.com/>

\* Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission's website: [www.cedar-rapids.org/civilrights/index.asp](http://www.cedar-rapids.org/civilrights/index.asp)

\* Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission's Facebook profile:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=1800976310>

\* Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission's Twitter page: <http://twitter.com/CRCivilRights>

\* Council Bluufs Civil Rights Commission's website: [www.CBcivilrights.org](http://www.CBcivilrights.org)

\* Davenport Civil Rights Commission's website: <http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/department/index.asp?fDD=7-0>

\* Des Moines Human Rights Commission's website: <http://www.ci.des-moines.ia.us/departments/HRT/index.htm>

\* Des Moines Human Rights Commission's Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.pho?gid=61448789490>

\* Dubuque Multicultural Family Center: <http://www.cityofdubuque.org/index.aspx?NID=1019>

\* Educating Iowans' Facebook profile: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=1586191886>

\* Iowa Civil Rights Commission's website: [www.state.ia.us/government/crc](http://www.state.ia.us/government/crc)

\* Iowa Civil Rights Commission's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/Des-Moines-IA/Iowa-Civil-Rights-Commission/80313175514?sid=7957774f78b6c3725913508fba58428f&ref=s>

\* Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Website: <http://www.icyd.org/>

\* Iowa Division of Latino Affairs: <http://www.latinofairs.iowa.gov/Index.htm>

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- \* Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project: [www.iowavistaproject.webs.com](http://www.iowavistaproject.webs.com)
- \* Iowa Immigration Education Coalition: <http://www.iowaimmigrationeducation.org/>
- \* Iowa Immigration Education Coalition Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1586191886>
- \* Iowa Immigration Education Coalition Facebook profile: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/Iowa-Immigration-Education-Coalition/60646430613>
- \* League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies' website: [www.leagueofiowahumanrights.com](http://www.leagueofiowahumanrights.com)
- \* Multicultural Connections Ministry Team: <http://newames.webs.com>
- \* Sioux City Human Rights Commission's website: <http://www.sioux-city.org/dept/index.asp?deptnum=14>
- \* Sioux City Human Rights Commission's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=39975528958>
- \* Sioux City Human Rights Commission's Twitter page: <http://twitter.com/HumanRightsSC>
- \* State of Iowa Youth Advisory Committee: <http://www.icyd.org/SIYAC/about.html>
- \* Status of African American's Blog: [www.iowaafricanamericans.blogspot.com](http://www.iowaafricanamericans.blogspot.com)
- \* United Ames' website: <http://unitedames.webs.com/>
- \* United Ames' Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups.php?id=501865237#/pages/United-Ames/138325735521?ref=sgm>
- \* University of Iowa Center for Human Rights' website: [www.uichr.org](http://www.uichr.org)
- \* University of Iowa Center for Human Rights' Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2208943211&ref=ts>
- \* Waterloo Commission on Human Rights' website: <http://www.ci.waterloo.ia.us/humanrights>