

# City of Rockville Human Rights Commission Achievements & Initiatives April 29, 2024



# Overview

- The Human Rights Commission (HRC) is an 11-member group of volunteers, appointed by the Mayor and Council, that is charged with minimizing the effects of conflict and promoting an appreciation of diversity within the City.
- To meet these goals, the HRC provides a variety of services and educational and cultural programs that promote global thinking, encourage civic awareness, and/or reflect the rich diversity found in the City.
- The HRC also advises the Mayor and Council on Human Rights issues that may affect residents.

# 2023 Rockville Human Rights Celebrations

- City Proclamations
  - Human Rights Day
  - Black History Month
  - Women's History (“Herstory”) Month
  - Autism Acceptance Month
  - Pride Month
- Recognitions
  - The City of Rockville earned a perfect 100 from the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Equality Index, an annual assessment of cities throughout the U.S. and their commitment to inclusivity of and equality for LGBTQ+ people who live and work there.

# MLK Day Celebration

The City's MLK Day Celebration, held each January to remember the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., includes speakers, cultural performances, information booths, and opportunities for service projects.



## MLK Day Celebration (continued)



This year, the 52nd MLK Day Celebration uplifted the theme “Celebrating Service to the Community,” saluting over a dozen participating nonprofits. Our program included:

- A film screening of “Finding Fellowship” with a Q&A with Rev. Dr. Gerard A. Green Jr.
- A panel discussion with JEDI professionals Selena Mendy Singleton and Tyree Davis IV
- A children’s performer, Groovy Nate,
- A Soul in Motion drum performance

We were also honored to hear Mayor Monique Ashton as our keynote speaker. Finally, Soul in Motion closed the event with a drum performance.



# Rockville Pride

Since 2017, the HRC has funded, organized, promoted, and operated Rockville Pride, an annual festival that celebrates Rockville's LGBTQ+ community.

The celebration has featured live performances, information booths, intimate dialogue, participation from local businesses and nonprofits, and children's activities such as crafts, face-painting, airbrush tattooing,



# Rockville Pride (continued)



On June 24th, 2023, the HRC hosted Rockville's Pride Celebration in Rockville Town Square, for the first time extending the length of the event from 2 hours to 3 hours.

This year's Pride Celebration will take place on Sunday, June 2, 2024, 2pm-5pm, in Rockville Town Square.

New Pride/Juneteenth Event 2024



# Student Ambassador Program

- The Student Ambassador Program (SAP) is an annual leadership opportunity for students (sophomores, juniors, and/or seniors) who live or attend high school in Rockville to serve as a Student Ambassadors.
- The goals of the SAP are to:
  - (1) educate participants about human rights and the HRC,
  - (2) allow them opportunities to develop leadership skills as they aid the HRC in planning and executing its programs,
  - (3) establish and maintain an on-going relationship between the HRC and the youth it serves, and
  - (4) improve the reach and effectiveness of the HRC programs and initiatives



# Human Rights Day

- Since 2019, the HRC has recognized Human Rights Day on December 10th, the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- In 2023, the HRC launched a subcommittee to evaluate the steps required to make the City of Rockville a Human Rights City. The HRC will present findings and recommendations to the Mayor and Council this year.

# Collaborative Projects with other Boards and Commissions

Montgomery County Remembrance and Reconciliation Commission - the MCRRC was created in 2019 to help the County claim and install the County's monument commemorating the three locations in the County where racial terror lynchings have been documented. On November 11, 2023, MCRRC honored Mr. John Diggs-Dorsey and Mr. Sidney Randolph, two victims of racial terror lynching who were murdered in Rockville. Two markers were installed at the Montgomery County Council Building, the site of the lynchings. The HRC is deeply honored to have supported this important event and continue working with MCRRC on their current and future initiatives.

Human Services -the HRC provides support to the Human Services Commission by reviewing applications to the City's caregiver grant program, amounting to \$750,000 each year.



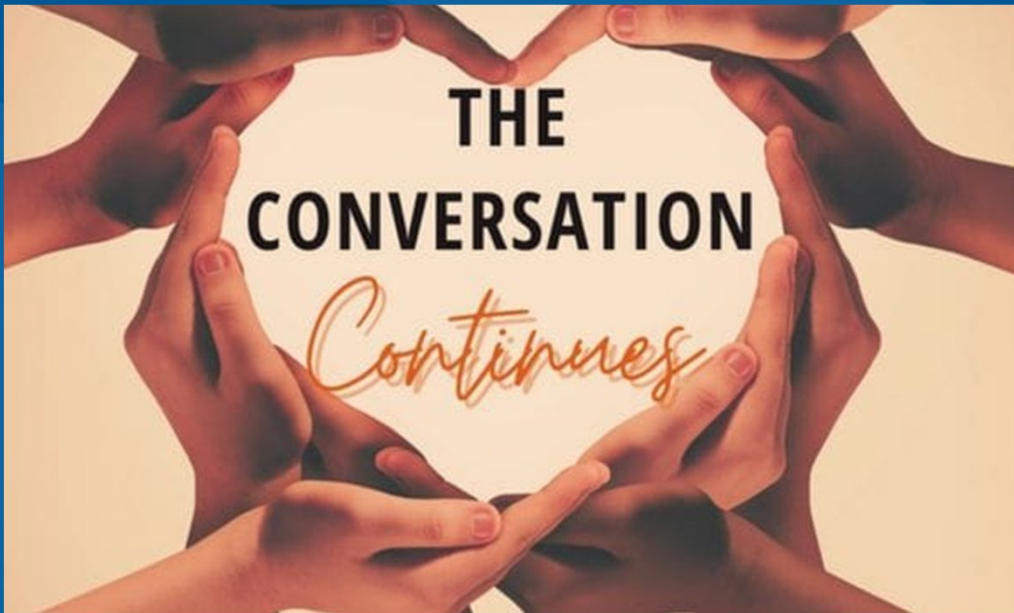
# Community Outreach and Engagement

- The HRC participates in community events to connect with Rockville residents, promote HRC initiatives, and to recruit volunteers. Some of these events include National Night Out, Rocktoberfest, and Hometown Holidays.
- During election years, the HRC works with Rockville staff to register and educate voters at various locations and events throughout the city.
- Through outreach, we empower community members to engage civically, including helping Rockville residents and community members to speak at Community Forum.
- In November 2023, an HRC member attended the Rockville Police Department Fair and Impartial Policing training.



# Community Outreach and Engagement Continued...

- In November 2023, we supported a request from Mainstreet for City funding for their Conversation Continues event, a gathering in partnership with the City of Rockville and BlackRock Center for the Arts focused on ways in which we feel safe and unsafe amidst turbulent current events.



# Advising the Mayor and Council

- Through consultation with the JEDI team and direct feedback to the Mayor and Council, the HRC supports the City's initiatives to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- In 2023, the HRC...
  - Advocated for more inclusive and accurate language in City resolutions.
  - Provided feedback to the Advisor to City Manager for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion on the drafted equity toolkit, mission, vision, and shared values.
  - Provided comments to the Mayor and Council re: the Charter Review Commission Recommendations.

# Additional Projects and Subcommittees

- The HRC operates subcommittees to maintain focus on certain ongoing issues and projects.
  - Current Affairs Subcommittee - keeps the HRC abreast of developments concerning human rights in and around the Rockville community.
  - Membership Subcommittee - reviews our procedures for appointment of new commissioners, welcomes new members, and provides information and resources to new members.

# Future Programming

- **Civic Education and Engagement**
  - The HRC is interested in partnering with other organizations/institutions to provide educational opportunities for community members to better understand not only how local civic institutions operate but also how human rights affects local matters.
  - The HRC is interested in continuing to engage with the Mayor and Council on issues related to human rights.
- **Disability Rights**
  - The HRC hopes to develop more programming specifically focusing on disability rights and disability issues in the Rockville community.
- **Interfaith Conversation**
  - The HRC hopes to foster community engagement through interfaith discussions.



# Future Programming

- In addition to the HRC's recurring events (MLK Day Celebration, Pride, Student Ambassador Program, Human Rights Day), the HRC intends to pursue projects relating to the following:
  - Follow-up programs or studies to the Wellbeing Survey: sought to assess the health of the Rockville community during the pandemic, it also revealed potential new areas of focus for the HRC:
    - Reflects shortcomings in how the HRC and other City entities communicate with and promote services with the community.
    - Reflects experienced discrimination in the provision of services by and among community members.
  - These are potential areas that substantially affect the Rockville community and directly implicate the mission of the HRC.

## Human Rights Commissioners

| Name                                            | Term Expiration  |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Molly Cullen, Co-Chair                          | May 1, 2024      |
| Gabrielle Zwi, Co-Chair, <i>pending renewal</i> | March 1, 2025    |
| Rebecca Murphy, Vice-Chair                      | October 1, 2025  |
| Florence E. Jewell                              | July 1, 2026     |
| Sinan Wolf-Gazo                                 | January 1, 2025  |
| Rachel Blomquist                                | October 21, 2025 |
| Zach Huebschman                                 | March 1, 2027    |
| Andrew "Scott" Catey                            | April 1, 2027    |

Human Rights Commission Staff Liaison: Tyree Davis IV

Human Rights Commission Councilmember Liaison: Izola Shaw

Former Human Rights Commission Councilmember Liaison: Dr. David Myles