

Athens Community Relations Committee

Meeting 2/9/2023 at 3:30 p.m., Athens Public Library

Present: John Schmieding, Kristyn Neckles, Rachel Siegal, Laura Black, Riley Beltran, Micah McCarey, and Lacey Rogers (by phone)

1. Minutes approved.

2. Athens Middle School.

- a. As a Winter 2023 pilot program, Athens Middle School has worked with Tantrum Theater and the Director of Theater at Ohio University. Brandon Thompson, John Schmieding, and Rachel Siegal have been meeting with John Rogers. Two workshops have been held at Arts West featuring scenes about bystander intervention. There's a third session (location TBD) on Tuesday, February 28th from 3-4:30 p.m. with the Middle School Drama Club.
- b. Kristyn Neckles has attended some planning meetings to help explore how Ohio Health can partner with the schools to discuss mental health topics.

3. Athens High School.

- a. Twelve to twenty students (mostly ninth graders) have been participating in the informal anti-racism group that has been facilitating discussions and empowering students to implement their project ideas. Students have expressed interest in improving and advertising reporting processes for bias-related incidents. A survey for students about their experiences may be used as an information gathering and awareness tool. Another group is making educational pamphlets. Other groups are focusing on athletics, sponsoring a multicultural fair, planning a week of Black History celebration, etc.
 - i. Conclusion: This work should continue and grow by extending educational support on DEIA topics to teachers and administrators
- b. Lacey Rogers facilitated a good conversation about Artifacts with High School students that Laura felt was very impactful.

4. Discrimination reporting and responding

- a. Two discrimination issues were recently reported through the city's See Click Fix mobile device app.
- One submission tagged an area for graffiti, which city official were unable to locate based on the information provided. -Accordingly, the ACRC will take no action.
- The second submission tagged the uptown Athens store, Artifacts, as a place where discrimination has occurred.
 - This report previously reached the ACRC in May of 2022, which resulted in the owner meeting with John Schmieding. ACRC members present thought it most appropriate to focus response efforts.
 - Suggested response steps: Rachel relayed a community group suggestion that the city and/ACRC create space for interested community members who might wish to discuss ways in which our community is (and is not) welcoming to different populations. Participants would explore relevant projects designed to respond to trans-exclusion concerns in the

community like collaborating with the Uptown Business Association on creating trans-affirming spaces, community education events, celebrating businesses demonstrating inclusive accountability, and having the city issue a statement on being a trans-affirming community. Facilitation of a planning meeting by a two or more gender diverse community members seems appropriate.

- Lacey, Kristyn, Rachel, and Dani (from Chamber of Commerce) will brainstorm what a program might like to see.
5. **Next meeting:** Thursday, March 9, 2023 at new time: 3:45-4:45 p.m., Athens Public Library Small Meeting Room
 6. **Future business items:**
 - a. Reviewing our Commission's charge and bylaws.
 7. **Announcements:**
 - Primary Care Office concern – Dr. Kroft is presently not available. Dr. Alex Fitzgerald is offering trans-affirming health care (working on certification, but can provide support). Read more about Dr. Fitzgerald here:
<https://www.ohiohealth.com/find-a-doctor/profile/1407240567/Alexandra-S-Fitzgerald-DO>