



"Bringing people together from worlds apart."

Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony
Report to the Community: January 2013 to July 2014

"I enjoy the presence of ACEH members in the community and believe they are honest and true to their beliefs about equal rights of human beings."

"Without this organization, I would not have met many of the people from different cultures who are now my close friends."

The Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony (ACEH) is a grass-roots organization founded in Holland in 1999 by a group of local residents. We work for justice, equal opportunity, appreciation for diversity, and cross-cultural understanding and to help create a community where all are welcomed and respected. We do this by:

- fostering **friendships** among members,
- **connecting** people with community organizations and resources,
- offering a **safe place** to work through issues of prejudice and discrimination,
- **advocating for non-discrimination** in all aspects of community life,
- holding **educational meetings and social gatherings** that are free and open to everyone,
- distributing timely **information** on multicultural events and job opportunities,
- providing **financial support** to local events and groups with related missions, and
- **participating** at local festivals and events with information tables and activities.

"ACEH was created as a safe, secure place for people to share stories and seek solutions."

A Safe Place: At ACEH meetings, people can share experiences of discrimination and prejudice and receive support and caring. The ACEH president responds to 5 to 10 calls a month from residents who need help in coping with various kinds of discrimination.

"The monthly meetings always give me something new to think about."

Educational meetings: Held 10 public educational meetings on these topics:

- Education under Fire: Bahai's in Iran
- "Anyone and Everyone": Diverse families who have a gay son or daughter
- "Traces of the Trade": a New England slave trading family comes to terms with its history
- Round Tables on Race discussion groups
- Community Mental Health: issues and resources
- Connecting People in Holland: Neighborhood organizations; senior citizens
- "Our Fires Still Burn": Native Americans in the Midwest
- Reimagining Diversity: a new way of thinking about diversity
- How Do You Know when You Belong?: Immigrants in West Michigan
- Able Bodies--Willing, Able, and Very Capable: panelists with disabilities

"This is the kind of diverse community I am so happy to be a part of."

Social gatherings: Hosted a community Potluck in the Park at Dunton Park in August and a community Holiday Potluck and Cultural Sharing Party at First United Methodist Church in December, with entertainment, children's activities, great food, fun and fellowship.

"In the Community' is a great resource. So grateful to you for keeping me informed."

Information about community events and issues: Published 17 monthly newsletters and 69 weekly issues of "In the Community" about area multicultural and diversity events, opportunities, and jobs, distributed through Constant Contact to approximately 1,000 email addresses; many recipients forward the emails to other people.

In monthly newsletter, publicized Viva la Vida, Cambodian New Year, Summit on Race and Inclusion, Fiesta, Justice for Our Neighbors, Juneteenth, Justice for Some/Justice for All Conversations on Race, Martin Luther King Jr. observances, Herrick Library events; PFLAG, Fair Housing, Asian Week, CWIT Reach for the Stars, Holland Civic Theatre diversity outreach; Civil Rights trainings; Korean New Year, immigration programs, Neighborhood Leadership Academy, Cesar Chavez lecture.

Maintained website www.harmonyalliance.org of information, photos, links to other organizations and Facebook group page: ACEH – Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony.

"ACEH is a valued force in the Holland community."

Financial support: Made a financial contribution to Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP) Fiesta, International Relations Commission's Multicultural Festival, Juneteenth, PRIDE, Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) immigration legal clinics, Center for African American Art and History, LAADSV (Lakeshore Alliance Against Domestic and Sexual Violence), City of Holland Youth Connection employment program. Contributed to national Southern Poverty Law Center and Teaching Tolerance.

Through the **ACEH Education Fund**, gave \$500 scholarships to two Upward Bound students in the name of the late community leader and former ACEH board member Becky Arenas.

Established temporary fund, **Love Is Stronger than Hate**, to collect funds to assist two African American households whose vehicles were attacked and damaged in the summer of 2013.

Prepared a May basket of household products for the Center for Women in Transition; collected nonperishable food items for Community Action House.

Participation in local events: International Relations Commission's Multicultural Festival, Juneteenth, PRIDE, Tulipanes, GVSU Diversity Fair with information tables and/or children's activities.

Cosponsored Lakeshore Women for Peace program on human trafficking; took part in Michigan Department of Civil Rights trainings and Hate Crimes Conference; joined Holland is Ready's list of LGBT-supportive businesses and groups.

"I appreciate all your efforts in the name of diversity."

Advocacy: Supported hiring a full-time Human Relations Coordinator for the City of Holland; made calls and statements for nondiscrimination in MAX bus advertising for a teenage actor.

Administration

- All-volunteer organization*, led by a diverse elected board of 9 members: Marvin Younger, John Yelding, Maggi Rivera, H. Bin Lim, Al Minert, Ngoc Mong Pham, Norma Luna, Bobbie Brown, and Patricia Bradfield. Anitha Prasad and Kyle Chauv were appointed in June 2014 to fill unexpired terms. Website manager Ken Cooper (*receives a fee); editor Ann Weller; database manager Herb Weller; email monitor Eleanor Lopez; PayPal monitor Liz Barveld. Yessenia Aguirre, youth advisors Jen and Yadah Ramirez, and Hope interns Jasmine Harris and Rebecca Weygandt also participated during this time.
- Financially supported by dues and contributions, by a silent auction of goods and services donated by some 60 local businesses and individuals, and by a fundraiser at Orange Leaf frozen yogurt store in April. 2014.
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- Obtained 501c (3) nonprofit tax status.
- Welcomed 49 new paid individual, family, nonprofit, and business members, for a total of 157, plus additional service members who contribute their time to the organization.

"Holland has changed, and continues to change, with the help of ACEH."

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