

Community Coalition for Social Justice
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Update: 8 May 2004

I. CCSJ PROJECTS

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Tuesday, July 6, 7 p.m. Place to be announced. Please contact Barb Howe at barbara.howe@mail.wvu.edu if you have issues for the steering committee to consider.

Report from Spring Networking Meeting Wednesday, April 14th

We had a good discussion among those who were able to attend the networking meeting on April 14th. It's always amazing to hear about all the various efforts that are underway in Morgantown that are related to social justice! Here are the highlights of our discussion:

§ Teresa Miller updated us on the city human rights commission so please see that update below in this Update.

§ We talked about whether a county human rights commission would be useful since the city commission's mandate is limited to the city limits of Morgantown. At the steering committee meeting on May 4th, we talked about starting informal discussions with the county commission about this idea and about seeing if there are other such commissions in the state that are established by county commissions. A county commission would focus on the unincorporated areas of the county, excluding Star City and Westover, for instance.

§ We talked about ways to network between student organizations and more community-based groups. John Lozier reported that the West Virginia Economic Justice Coalition has been very active when there was student interest in specific projects, but it may be inactive now. Living wages have been an issue for this group, as well as for CCSJ.

§ John shared information on the **“organizational fair”** that was one of the successful projects that the Economic Justice Coalition used to sponsor. Since our annual meeting in the fall will mark our 5th anniversary (we started in the late fall of 1999), we thought this would be a good opportunity to adopt that project for the meeting. We were also motivated to think about this because of the Mon-Earth Benefit Concert to highlight the work of area environmental groups. So, please consider this as **your invitation to participate in this fair if you belong to any organization that you feel has a social justice mission**. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a room full of people sharing the work of their organizations? More details like date and place will be forthcoming, and thanks to Kris Hash and Shelly Barrick Parsons, who have agreed to work on this. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Kris at kmhash@mail.wvu.edu or Shelly at shellybparsons@msn.com.

§ While CCSJ cannot support individual candidates in an election, we can encourage our members to raise issues that we feel are important. We thought we should use every opportunity, for instance, to encourage candidates to support an expanded state hate crimes bill to include crimes based on disabilities, age discrimination (that's a new addition from earlier efforts to expand this legislation), and sexual orientation. Teresa Miller reported that the Morgantown police are now supportive of this expansion after the recent incident downtown where students were attacked, apparently because they are gay. The West Virginia Human Rights Commission was contacted for assistance, but there was nothing the commission could do officially because hate crimes based on sexual orientation are not covered in the state legislation.

- § We talked about whether it is time to advocate for a city ordinance like the Charleston has that would address hate crimes, even if we can't change state law.
- § We discussed encouraging candidates in this year's election to talk about state support for economic development that would be based on jobs that pay a self-sufficient wage/living wage. At least one gubernatorial candidate has indicated that he did not support such state support if these jobs did not pay this type of wage.
- § Mary Rehmman shared the work of the local Mental Health Association and announced the walk it was sponsoring on May 1st, as well as the upcoming project of SPROUT, which is the acronym for "Spiritual People Really Ought to Understand Trees"! If you are interested in these efforts or the homeless initiative described below, please contact Mary at Rehmmanlaw@labyrinth.net or 296-1322.
- § Mary also talked about the four-county Mon Valley Homeless Initiative that covers Monongalia, Marion, Preston, and Taylor counties. Preston and Taylor counties have no shelters for the homeless, so people in those counties have to use Bartlett House in Morgantown if they are from Preston County or the Marion County shelter if they are from Taylor County. Bartlett House provides shelter for 30-50 people a night. Taylor County does have a transition house that can accommodate a few people transitioning from Sharp Hospital. The group has been applying for grants, but these are often more targeted to urban areas. Using funding from the Morgantown Community Development Block Grant program, the group hopes to be able to collect the data it needs to be more successful in subsequent grant applications. If you are interested in this project, the group meets every fourth Thursday at 1 p.m. in the downstairs meeting room of the Morgantown Public Library. We talked about the need to develop a flyer that would be widely distributed at places like the public library or Health Right that would include information about where food, shelter, and clothing are available to those who need assistance. The information is available, but this would put it in a convenient format for those who need it.

If you are interested in any of the above issues where another contact person is not already identified, please contact Barb Howe at barbara.howe@mail.wvu.edu.

Library Books Project

We are pleased to share these notes we received from the two public school librarians who accepted our offer of three free books for their schools. First, from Vicki Wilson, librarian at North Elementary School: "Thanks to you and the Community Coalition for Social Justice for the three books you gave to our North Elementary Library collection. They are processed and on the shelves - ready for checkout. The students, staff, and I are very grateful for your donations. May your program continue to increase awareness and respect for all."

And, from Linda Yost, librarian at Woodburn Elementary: "We received the books donated by the Community Coalition for Social Justice. They are beautiful books which deal with subjects that are relevant and important for our students. They are being circulated among our staff members to make them aware of the books' addition to our media center. Thank you for your help."

We recently received a letter from the Appalachian Community Fund, saying that we were still being considered for funding for the grant application we filed last fall. If we are successful, we would be able to use the funds to buy social justice books for children to use at the Clay-Battelle and Browns Halleck public libraries in the county. Stay tuned - we hope to know if we are successful by the time you get the next Update!

Nominating Committee

We will be forming a nominating committee at our next steering committee meeting to identify new members of the committee and candidates for officers, so, if you are interested in being more involved in CCSJ, please contact Tim Hairston at questz1@adelphia.net.

II. PLEASE SEND YOUR DUES AND IDEAS!

If you have not yet done so, please send your dues so that we have the resources to continue our work. We use your money to purchase books for local schools, for instance. **Dues are \$5 for individuals and \$25 for organizations.** Youth under the age of 18 are free. Please send your checks, payable to CCSJ, to PO Box 160, Morgantown, WV 26507-0160.

Please send your web site suggestions to Mike Attfield at attfield@labyrinth.net.

Please contact any of the steering committee members to volunteer to help and to share your suggestions for our work or e-mail us at ccsjwv@hotmail.com.

Deadline for items to include in next Update will be May 30. Please send items to share with our membership to ccsjwv@hotmail.com.

If we can support your event or your issues in some way, please let us know, especially if you represent a member organization. We want to be a true coalition that unites groups and individuals interested in social justice, so please let us know how we can help and please send us information about your group to publicize to our membership.

III. NEWS OF MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

WVU Center for Women's Studies Upcoming Events

October 13-15 - Women and Creativity 2004: Examining the Past/Composing the Future - The third decennial women and creativity conference combined with Sixth Women's Studies Residency in Honor of Judith Gold Stitzel will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Morgantown and the WVU Creative Arts Center. The keynote speaker will be composer Libby Larsen on Wednesday, October 13. For more information, please see www.as.wvu.edu/wmst/wvuwomenandcreativity.htm. Co-sponsors are the Center for Women's Studies, College of Creative Arts, and WVU Council for Women's Concerns, with assistance from Arts Monongahela, Inc., the Convention and Visitors Bureau, WVU Department of English, and Eberly College of Arts and Sciences. The West Virginia Humanities Council is also providing financial assistance.

IV. MORGANTOWN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION UPDATE

The Morgantown Human Rights Commission is interested in community education and advocacy projects. Members are talking about hosting a tristate conference for buildings and contractors to learn about universal housing codes. This means that houses would be built with doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and grab bars in showers, for instance. One idea is to link this program to continuing education requirements that contractors need to meet to keep their licenses.

Please contact Teresa Miller at teresamiller@email.com or 598-2866 if you are interested in the work of this commission.

We all agreed that the Human Rights Commission needs more publicity.

IV. KUDOS!!! BRAVO!!!

Congratulations to all those involved in the recent **Mon-Earth Benefit Concert**, especially to Robert Tower, who produced the concert. The Met Theater was full of tables about various local organizations that are dedicated to improving the environment, and, combined with the talented musicians on stage, the evening was a great event to celebrate Earth Day.

Also, congratulations to the Morgantown High School students who participated in “On Tidy Endings,” the one-act play by Harvey Fierstein about the effect of AIDS on a family. The play debuted on May 7th and closes on May 8th so, if you are getting this by email, there is still time to get to MHS at 7 p.m. tonight. Tickets are only \$3. Alexandra McConnell-Trivelli directed the play, and the actors are Katie Hornak as Marion (the former wife of Colin, who died of AIDS), Mollie Pettit (the lawyer), Shea Thompson (Marion’s and Colin’s son), and Tim Vetere (Arthur, Colin’s partner). The students had the consent of their parents to participate in this play, so thanks, also, to the parents who understood what a powerful experience this could be for their sons and daughters. And thanks to those who came to the play and said “I heard about it through CCSJ!”

We’re sure that the youth of our communities are involved in many other social justice efforts such as this play and the program from the MHS African-American Awareness Club this past winter. So, if you know of these events that we can publicize, please send the information to Barb Howe. It would be wonderful if we could have a regular feature about these events in Update.

CCSJ Steering Committee 2003-2004

Tim Hairston (Monongalia-Preston Labor Council AFL-CIO), President. Al Anderson, Vice President. Barb Howe (WVU Center for Women’s Studies), Secretary. Gregory Wagner, Treasurer. Mike Attfield. Judy Cohen. Lourdes Cottingham (Equality for All Americans). Suzanne Gosden. Kris Hash. Jacqueline Moseley. Shelly Barrick Parsons (Presbyterian campus ministry). Michael Sharley. Deb Strouse (WV Center for Dispute Resolution).