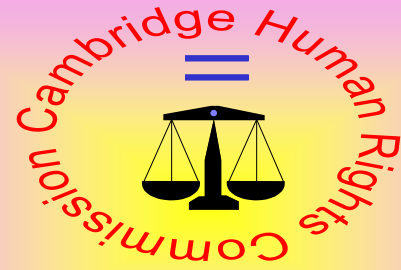


CAMBRIDGE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



DATELINE

Newsletter of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission



SUMMER 2010

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**From the Desk of the
Executive Director
*Marlissa Briggett***



In January, I joined the Cambridge Human Rights Commission as Executive Director. I'm a practicing attorney with a background in civil rights law. In addition, for over ten years, I've served as an appointed Commissioner to the Arlington Human Rights Commission where I live with my family.

I've spent the last few months learning about the many issues in which the Cambridge Human Rights Commission engages. I've been particularly impressed with the efficient and skillful handling of discrimination complaints that are filed with our office. Parties are treated with respect and attention and investigations into complaints are thorough and unbiased. Throughout our complaint process, we have been emphasizing mediation wherever it is appropriate and we hope to continue this emphasis.

The Commission also engages in outreach work to let others know of the Commission's work and to educate members of the public about their rights under the civil rights laws. Our staff reaches out to the schools to teach children about the fair housing laws. We also work with other city agencies and non-profits to collaborate on areas of mutual interest.

In the months ahead, I look forward to working with the Commissioners and staff to engage in further outreach to the community so that Cambridge residents know where to turn when they face potential discrimination. We've welcomed two new Commissioners this spring and look forward to a retreat in September to outline the Commission's goals and create a strategic plan to make a positive difference in the community.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like to be placed on our mailing list or if you have specific concerns or questions. We can be reached at 617-349-4396 or by email at mbriggett@cambridgema.gov.



Cambridge City Council

David P. Maher, *Mayor*
 Henrietta Davis, *Vice Mayor*
 Leland Cheung
 Marjorie Decker
 Craig Kelley
 Kenneth E. Reeves
 Sam Seidel
 E. Denise Simmons
 Timothy J. Toomey, Jr

City Executive Administrators

Robert W. Healy, *City Manager*
 Richard C. Rossi, *Deputy City Manager*

CHRC Staff

Marlissa Briggett
Executive Director
 Carmen S. Negrón
Office Manager/ Project Coordinator
 Colleen Johnston
Attorney Investigator
 Joseph Johnson
Outreach Coordinator

CHRC Board of Commissioners

Marla Erlien, *Chair*
 Mercedes Evans, *Vice Chair*
 Elaine Angelone
 Bevin Croft
 William Donovan
 Melissa Gonzalez-Brenes
 Christopher Hope
 Charles Kavanagh
 Daniel Klubock
 Susan Ostrander
 Randa Shedid



WELCOME OUR TWO NEW COMMISSIONERS

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission has a board of 11 Commissioners. On April 6, 2010, City Manager Robert W. Healy appointed the following two Commissioners:



Bevin Croft – Bevin holds a Master of Public Policy in Social Policy from the Brandeis University Heller School of Social Policy and Management, where she is currently pursuing a Ph.D as a National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Fellow. She currently works at as a research assistant in the mental health policy team at the Human Services Research Institute, a non-profit in Cambridge. Prior to her work at HSRI, Bevin worked as a Human Rights Coordinator and Quality Management Coordinator at Cascap, Inc., a non-profit organization which provides affordable housing and supportive services to low income individuals with disabilities. At Cascap, Inc., Bevin served as a trainer and consultant to staff, consumers, and community members in the areas of human rights, person-centered planning, psychiatric rehabilitation, and recovery.



Melissa Gonzalez-Brenes – Melissa is an Educator and an Economist who has worked on poverty eradication programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. She has also written on the link between economics and gender violence. Melissa has served as a mentor for a Somali family in Lynn, MA, a medical interpreter for Latino families in Lawrence, MA, and a teacher's assistant at a shelter for victims of domestic violence.

Fair Housing Update: Discrimination in Advertising

Recently, the Massachusetts Attorney General's office filed six complaints against landlords and real estate companies accused of violating state anti-discrimination laws by posting discriminatory housing advertisements on the popular website Craigslist. Under state, federal and local fair housing laws, it is illegal to discriminate against a person seeking housing because of a person's race, color, religion, sex, familial status (e.g. children or marital status), national origin or disability. Additionally, in Massachusetts, it is also illegal to discriminate against a person because of a person's marital status, sexual orientation, military status, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance. Advertisements with statements like "No Section 8" or "No Children" should be reported to local fair housing agencies. In Cambridge, these concerns can be reported to the Cambridge Human Rights Commission at 617-349-4396. In Boston, such concerns can be reported to the Boston Fair Housing Commission at 617-635-2500. Listings within Massachusetts can be reported to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination at 617-994-6000. Nationwide, such listings can be reported to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Discrimination Hotline at 1-800-669-9777.



FAIR HOUSING OPENS DOORS TO DIVERSITY IN OUR COMMUNITY



The Cambridge Human Rights Commission Fair Housing Award Ceremony

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission celebrated its seventeenth annual Fair Housing Award Ceremony on April 27, 2010. The ceremony marked the culmination of a month of fair housing activities, including the Commission’s annual poster and essay contest for middle school students in Cambridge on the theme “Fair Housing Opens Doors to Diversity in Our Community.” After holding fair housing workshops for a variety of schools and after school programs, the Commission received sixty four entries to the contest which represented students from across the city.

At the Award Ceremony, Cambridge Human Rights Commissioner Christopher Hope delivered the keynote speech. He spoke personally about his childhood experience with family homelessness in Atlanta, Georgia. As a young student, Mr. Hope saw education as the critical route out of these circumstances. His story spoke directly to the students who attended the event as he emphasized the important interplay between housing and education. Mr. Hope is currently a Master’s student at Harvard Divinity School, a graduate of Tufts University and a social activist.

The Commission also recognized the work of Marianne Colangelo who received the “Innovations in Fair Housing Award.” Ms. Colangelo is the Information and Referral Coordinator for the City’s Department of Human Services Program. The award recognizes her work in creating and maintaining materials on community housing resources, specifically the pocket guide, the housing resource brochure and the Cambridge/Somerville Resource Guide. These materials are invaluable to Cambridge residents, particularly those who are experiencing issues with respect to their housing, and to the service providers (including the Commission) who assist those residents.

The annual award ceremony was co-sponsored by the **Cambridge Savings Bank, the Cambridge Trust Company and the East Cambridge Savings Bank** who are long-term supporters of the event. Student winners received prizes which included savings bonds from the banks. We thank these banks and also the following businesses for their donation of prizes for the student winners: **MIT Credit Union, Charles Hotel, Boston Red Sox, Cambridgeside Galeria, Harvard Coop, Boston Duck Tours, Izzy’s Restaurant, Lanes and Games, Redbones BBQ, Picante.**



KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Christopher Hope

Christopher Hope is currently a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School. Having received his B.A. from Tufts University in Comparative Religions, he is now seeking ordination in the Pentecostal denomination. Mr. Hope serves as outreach minister for his church, Pentecostal Tabernacle, and as a Human Rights Commissioner for the City of Cambridge. His interests in issues concerning social justice are long-standing, including his leadership of the Tufts student group, Project: REPEAL, whose objective was to repeal a Somerville loitering ordinance, and whose events are documented in the short film Color Coded: Battling the Law. Mr. Hope is also a musician and on-air personality for Harvard’s radio station, WHRB.

2010 Fair Housing Month Award Winners



Cristina Vaca
First Prize
King Open School



Mirella Greenberg
Second Prize
King Open School

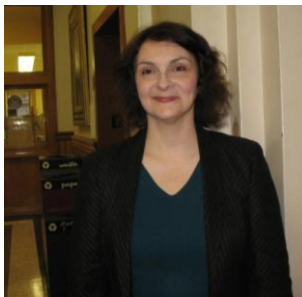
TOP PRIZE WINNERS

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 st Prize | Cristina Vaca |
| 2 nd Prize | Mirella Greenberg |
| 3 rd Prize | Catherine Amado-Gonzalez |
| 3 rd Prize | Victoria Wu |
| 4 th Prize | Kiana Samuels |
| 4 th Prize | Piper C. Galyean |
| 5 th Prize | Rose Chalfin-Wakeley |
| 5 th Prize | Tahj Abbott-Linton |
| 6 th Prize | Isabel Bryant |
| 6 th Prize | Claire Frey |



HONORABLE MENTION

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Jessie Rubin | Sabrina DiBella |
| Harriet Small | Eva DiIanni-Miller |
| Ava Smith | Yemisi Gbenedor |
| Tamjid Rahman | Maya Halprin-Adams |
| Natalie Ribeiro | Nathan Harbinson |
| Tanisha Torres | Karolyn Lee |
| Yeji Ahn | Chaimaa Medhat |
| Nell Baker | Mark Parise |
| Mickaella Casseus | Sarah Liu Pierce |

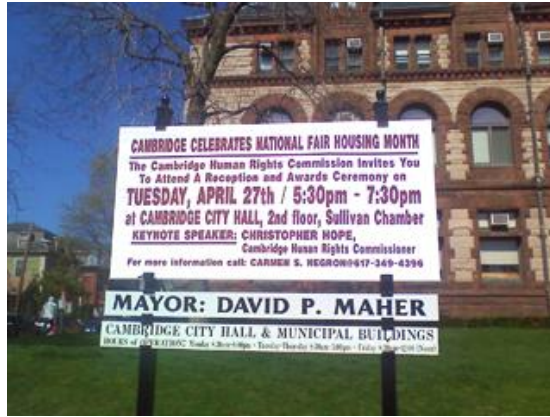


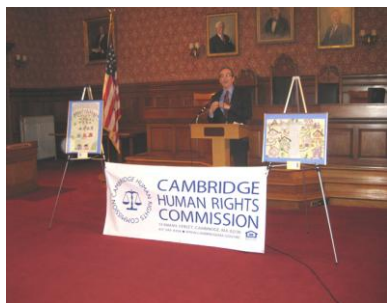
Marianne Colangelo
**Innovations in
Fair Housing Award**

Marianne Colangelo is the Information and Referral Coordinator for the City's Department of Human Services Program. Marianne was recognized for her work in creating and maintaining materials on community housing resources.

**CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL THE
WINNERS!**

2010 Fair Housing Month





Recognizing and Welcoming a Muslim Holiday in the Cambridge Public Schools

On January 5, 2010, the Cambridge School Committee voted to work towards including one of the Eid holidays on the 2010 calendar and beyond, in recognition of our growing Muslim student and staff populations. The action represented the culmination of a long-term collaboration between Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) students, school administration, the Cambridge School Committee and the Cambridge Human Rights Commission.

Human Rights Commissioners Marla Erlien and Randa Shedid worked closely on the matter. Chairperson Erlien noted that “it grew out of a forum the Human Rights Commission had held at the high school in 2006 to address students’ experience of discrimination.” At that earlier forum, Commissioners learned some of the Muslim students’ specific concerns. Among other things, students noted frustration about having a lack of a safe and quiet place to pray, the suspicion they aroused when they were out of school for religious holidays and the lack of equity given that Christian and Jewish holidays were on the school calendar.

As a result of these concerns, as well as a broader concern of the need for education among the school community about issues facing Muslim students, the Commissioners organized a series of meetings with Principal Christopher Saheed who organized a meeting to include teachers and students. With the help of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, these meetings led the students to organize a widely attended assembly on Muslim issues in April 2009. Through videos, questions and answers and performance, Muslim students and non-Muslim students engaged in constructive and spirited dialogue about the misconceptions and discrimination faced by Muslim students.

Commissioner Shedid noted that Commissioners sought to empower the students so that they could address their concerns, “We gave them the tools and created a bridge that didn’t exist before.” The students subsequently formed a Muslim Student’s Association which is currently active in CRLS with both Muslim and non-Muslim participants. Commissioner Erlien stressed that students took the lead in advocating for recognition of a Muslim holiday during the school year. They arranged for Superintendent Young to come to one of the organizing meetings at CRLS where Dr. Young attentively listened to the arguments for such a school holiday. Additionally, a half dozen students attended a December 2009 school committee meeting to demonstrate their commitment to including the Muslim holiday on the school calendar where two of them spoke during Public Comment.

Following the January School Committee vote, longtime Cambridge resident Mushtaque Mirza called the Commission to express his appreciation for the collaborative work of the CRLS students, the Human Rights Commission and the Cambridge School Committee. Mr. Mirza told the Commission, “the City of Cambridge has made history in recognizing Muslim holidays, along with Jewish and Christian holidays. The city has taken a step in which students of three faiths will be able to celebrate their holidays. It recognizes and shows a respect for the faith of Cambridge’s residents.”

The resolution passed by the School Committee is currently being negotiated with the various unions that represent those who work for the School Department.

Walk For Haiti



In March, the Cambridge Human Rights Commission fielded a team at the Seventh Annual Urban Walk for Haiti, a three mile walk through Cambridge which benefited Partners in Health.

MEET THE CAMBRIDGE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION STAFF



*From left to right Joseph Johnson, Outreach Coordinator, Carmen S. Negrón, Office Manager/Project Coordinator
Marlissa Briggett, Executive Director and Colleen Johnston, Attorney Investigator*

If you feel like you have been discriminated against, we are here to help. Our offices are open Mondays 8:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m., Tuesdays-Thursdays 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Fridays 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and our telephone number is 617-349-4396.

Hablamos Español.

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability. The CHRC will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request. Our office is wheelchair accessible.

Newsletter Editor: Carmen S. Negrón



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