



DISCOVERING DIVERSITY IN SPRINGFIELD

ACTION PLAN: Increase Springfield's diversity.

Springfield's public image, both within and beyond our region, is a critical element of our economic future. It is vital that our community understands the competitive dynamics of today's economy, and that we support programs and policies that embrace diversity as we move forward.

Objective 1: Dispel myths about Springfield and better differentiate the region nationally.

Objective 2: Increase greater Springfield's community diversity.

Objective 3: Initiate internal dialogues on Springfield's competitive dynamics.

--taken from *Competitive Assessment of Springfield, Missouri*, Market Street Services Inc. See the complete report at www.springfieldchamber.com

DIVERSITY: NUMBERS DON'T DO IT JUSTICE

*A. Leslie Anderson, Ph.D., LP, CDP; Interim Vice President; Office for Diversity and Inclusion
Missouri State University*

Springfield area business, education, faith, and community leaders are embarking on an exciting new dedication to diversity development. In our efforts to better understand our community environment for our current and future workforce, and to decrease the so-called "welcoming deficit" with regard to diverse populations, many of us focus simply on the numbers. We may ask, "How many folks, in which identity groups, are in our community, and how has that changed?" We may even ask, "What does this mean?" or, "What can we do about it?"

Demographically, Springfield and the region have changed dramatically in the past few years, and projections suggest more rapid changes on the horizon. In the last decade, the population of the region has grown just

under 15%, with changes in the overall demographic landscape. Springfield has increased its racial/ethnic diversity, with an increase in the Hispanic population of 91.5%; an increase in the black population of 46.8%; American Indians have increased by 16.8%; multi-racial population has increased 72%; Asian/Pacific Islanders have increased by 73.3%; and Whites have increased by 15.6%. While Springfield remains relatively homogenous, with a 91.5% white population (from 93.8% in 2000), these dramatic demographic

changes are the focus of attention from business and city leaders, educators, faith leaders, and citizens.

Often we discover that people in our organizations or in the community too narrowly define diversity to include only those visible aspects of identity groups, sometimes



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**GETTING TO KNOW....
LOCAL NAACP PRESIDENT
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**CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, CITY UTILITIES OF SPRINGFIELD,
GREENE COUNTY, MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY, OZARKS TECHNICAL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE, SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT,
SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

MAJOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2011

- 1 ECCLESIASTICAL NEW YEAR - ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
- 5 LABOR DAY
- 8 NATIVITY OF MARY - CHRISTIAN
- 14 ELEVATION OF THE LIFE GIVING CROSS - HOLY CROSS DAY - CHRISTIAN
- 29-30 ROSH HASHANAH - JEWISH

OCTOBER 2011

- 8 YOM KIPPUR - JEWISH
- 10 THANKSGIVING - INTERFAITH - CANADA
- 26 DIWALI - JAIN - HINDU - SIKH
- 30 REFORMATION DAY - PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN
- 31 ALL HALLOWS EVE - CHRISTIAN

NOVEMBER 2011

NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

- 6 EID AL ADHA - ISLAM
- 10 GURU NANAK DEV SAHIB BIRTHDAY - SIKH
- 24 THANKSGIVING - INTERFAITH
- 26 DAY OF COVENANT - BAHA'I
- HIJRA - NEW YEAR - ISLAM
- 27 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - CHRISTIAN

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even limiting the term to differences in skin color, or the social construction of race. Indeed, the multitude of differences that can be used in the service of enriching our lives and work include both individual differences (such as personality and individual experiences), and group differences (such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability, age, and cultural, religions and political affiliations). When we discuss improving our workplaces and our community diversity climate, we're talking about all of these areas of diversity, and, of course, we are aware of the similarities of our common humanity that help us to navigate this changing landscape. Inclusion is the active and intentional engagement of diversity to enhance our businesses and community. For those who are dedicated to building a strong and vibrant community that is founded on principles of social justice and opportunity for all of its citizens, we may also simply note the racial/ethnic trend numbers and recognize there are needs for us to grow and change, but wonder how.

It has recently been noted that appreciation of diversity has a multitude of benefits, from increasing our cognitive capacity to helping us become better citizens and foster productive solutions to problems shared by humanity (hunger, peace, health, safety, environmental protection). Scott Page, in his cutting-edge research, reports that cognitive diversity leads to better outcomes in problem solving and prediction, specifically that a diverse team outperforms an expert working alone 97% of the time. He writes: "The problems we face in the world are very complicated. Any one of us can get stuck. If we're in an organization where everyone thinks in the same way, everyone will get stuck in the same place. But if we have people with diverse tools, they'll get stuck in different places. One person can do their best, and then someone else can come in and improve on it. There's a lot of empirical data to show that diverse cities are more productive, diverse boards of directors make better decisions, the most innovative companies are diverse."



So how do we do justice to diversity beyond the numbers?

In order to continually assess our organizations and community for inclusive environment, policies and practices, it is advisable to look beyond the numbers to these four areas: Access, Success and Equity; Climate; Active Learning; and Commitment.

ACCESS, SUCCESS AND EQUITY

includes the demographic information, but in more detailed form. These explorations concern not only who is here, but also how employees or citizens fare in the organization or community. Our questions include the degree to which various populations are represented in all community and organization roles—from leadership and consultation to middle management to service and support. We can ask ourselves:

- Whose voices are included/left out of the decision-making process?
- Does the upper management accurately reflect the demographics of the organization?
- Are there opportunities for each person to advance based on her or his capacity to contribute to the community and to the organization?
- Do we have support and retention programs, such as employee resource groups?

CLIMATE questions try to assess how it feels in our community

FOR EMPLOYERS, SECURING AND RESPECTING A DIVERSE WORKPLACE IS BENEFICIAL FOR ALL EMPLOYEES



or organization, for each of our constituents. We might ask:

- Does our organization provide regular, ongoing training regarding barriers to opportunity and embedded cultural/racial inequities?
- Are we sensitive to ethnic and cultural practices outside those of the dominant group?
- Do all of our citizens/employees feel able to bring their best to all that they do?
- Are we intentional about creating a safe and supportive environment for all, reflected in our responsiveness to needs expressed outside of our own familiarity (e.g. allowance for prayer times for Muslim citizens/employees, extension of household benefits/opportunities, positive responses to cultural foods and celebrations)?
- Is cultural competence training ongoing for all in our organization?

ACTIVE LEARNING is the awareness of the benefits we bring to our community and businesses because of our differences. It is the intentional environment we create to learn from and appreciate perspectives other than our own. We may ask:

- Do our employees/citizens understand and value each other's diverse perspectives?
- Do we offer and encourage the development of cultural competence skills?
- Are we fully able to take advantage of the enrichment that comes from diverse points of view and cultural perspectives?

COMMITMENT is the degree to which our efforts are comprehensive and shared. This is the organization's movement from diversity activities as isolated initiatives to comprehensive and coordinated activities across all endeavors. This will include the expression of core values of diversity and inclusion in mission, vision and strategic planning documents; attention to the impact of policies and practices on diverse populations; leadership modeling from all administrative and leadership levels; development of a comprehensive and aligned scorecard that shares responsibility across the

organization and community; and the commitment of adequate resources (personnel and financial).

- Do our Mission/Vision statements explicitly reflect the values of living in a diverse, multicultural society?
- Is there an active leadership development plan that is inclusive of those who have been historically excluded from these roles?
- Does our organization discuss the importance of diverse perspectives?
- Are diverse perspectives and issues reflected in our planning documents?
- Does our policy language reflect the value of cultural competence and of having a diverse constituency?
- Is diversity seen as "everyone's" responsibility?

It is safe to say that we all want to live, work, learn, play, serve, worship, and enjoy a community that is safe, clean, healthy, and economically viable; with good music, good food, the arts, sporting events, engaging conversations, innovation, and most importantly, opportunity. Becoming more culturally competent will underscore our commitment to the improvement of Springfield and the region as a growing, vibrant, and thriving community that both attracts new talent and is a place that retains the best and brightest of those who call Springfield home. Doing justice with diversity and inclusion will help our community and our businesses to thrive into the future.



The Greene County Juvenile Office's Leadership Team was presented with a shadow box reflecting

the Native American Heritage of Missouri State University's Criminology & Criminal Justice Intern Samantha Lucas. The shadow box proudly hangs on the wall in the front office area at the Greene County Juvenile Justice Center.

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ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Dr. Nate Quinn, SPS

Springfield Public Schools and the Office of Cultural Diversity are committed to building a school district community in which all areas of cultural diversity are valued. Diversity enriches educational experiences by affording opportunities to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions that are often the foundation for insensitivity, misunderstanding, and conflict. The Office of Cultural Diversity is committed to increasing knowledge and awareness of cultural differences, as well as eliminating bigotry, both overt and subtle. Each student within the district is treated with respect, and supports are in place to ensure success for all children.

Improving relationships in the workplace, celebrating and respecting differences, and improving the economic status of all our citizens will make Springfield a more welcoming community. Springfield Public Schools accepts the responsibility of recognizing, accepting, respecting and educating our stakeholders about the individual differences in our community. These differences can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.



DIVERSITY AWARENESS PARTNERSHIP

Zach Adams, Greene County
Juvenile Office

It is the hope of the Greene County Family Court: Juvenile Division's Diversity Awareness Partnership to affirm and value the diversity that exists within our community. To further this vision, we have adopted the mission statement, "Commitment to Embrace our Unique Community."

In our pursuit to recognize and embrace diversity, it is our intent to better serve the children and families we work with everyday. Just like a fingerprint, no two people are alike. Everyone is diverse. It is our duty and responsibility to identify, embrace, and respect the uniqueness of every man, woman and child.

By displaying diversity through the words, art and photography of youth, individuals will see their own culture and heritage on the walls within our building. Personal connection is vital. By seeing their heritage on our walls, the children and families (our clients) and our employees will feel a connection. As a government entity, we must do all that we can to create a feeling of community. It is our hope that people will recognize and feel a sense of inclusion of their heritage and culture when they walk through our doors. This can be possible through the creative minds and work of Greene County's youth.

We encourage all organizations or businesses to foster diversity and inclusion by making it a critical part of business strategy. Make Diversity Awareness visible. Take a look at the walls of your organization. Do your employees, customers, and community see their heritage or culture reflected on the walls within your organization or business? We must be welcoming. Not only to the employees you work with everyday, but also to all of the people who walk through your front doors. Our community is changing. Our nation is changing. We owe it to ourselves and our future to make a "Commitment to Embrace our Unique Community."

GETTING TO KNOW....LOCAL NAACP PRESIDENT CHERYL CLAY

Pat Dierking, City Utilities

The National Organization for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), one the oldest civil rights organizations, believes in the dignity of all human beings and works to identify and remove the barriers to equality and justice. In July of this year, Cheryl Clay, their secretary, accepted the position of president for the local chapter of the NAACP, and with that role, the responsibility to engage business and community leaders to participate in the economic, social, and cultural growth within our community. Her primary focus is to educate and develop leaders from historically excluded groups in the hope to understand their past while empowering them to be our leaders of tomorrow. She must face the perception that the NAACP is helping only African-Americans, and believes a sincere effort with a lot of open discussion will help move our community in the right direction.

Cheryl lives by the motto, "Treat everyone as you want to be treated." She follows this rule in all aspects of her life, which makes her a good leader and role model. And her passion? Youth. While living in Denver, Colorado, Cheryl worked for organizations similar to the Boys Ranch, helping children and young adults who could no longer function within their home settings. Although she loved the purpose of her job, she found it could be both physically and emotionally demanding and decided to end her career in this branch of human services. She does find comfort in the fact that her new role with the NAACP will allow her to continue helping the youth through a different venue and focus.

Growing up as a child in Springfield, Cheryl attended Boyd Elementary, Pipkin Junior High, and Central High School. Later in her life, she moved



to Boston, Chicago, and Denver where she gained new experiences and perspectives which eventually led her back to Springfield and to her new husband, Lynn. She grew up knowing Lynn, dated him in high school, and rekindled their friendship while on a visit to see her mother. After a two-year, long-distance romance, the two decided to marry and make their home in Springfield.

This change in Cheryl's life brought her to City Utilities (CU). She was hired in August 2003 as a temporary employee in the tree trimming department. A few months later, she was hired full-time and spent the last seven years at CU's Belcrest location. Cheryl maintains a database that tracks equipment, manages maintenance orders, and provides clerical support for the group.

With her current job and new responsibilities with the NAACP, Cheryl also finds time to serve on the board of the Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery located at Chestnut Expressway and Barnes, historically known as the first predominantly black cemetery in Springfield. This cemetery holds a special place in her heart as it serves as the final resting place for many of her family members. She also serves on the board of the Bartley-Decatur Neighborhood Center located at Calhoun and Texas. This former African-American hospital and daycare has been renovated and will be used as a multi-purpose community center.

If you visit Cheryl at home, you might find her crocheting and or making plans to help at her childhood church, Gibson Chapel Presbyterian Church. Between her blended family of seven step-children from a previous marriage and her two sons living in Colorado and Texas, she spends time traveling to visit them and her many grandchildren.

DIVERSITY AND YOU Public organizations and their employees are leaders in our community. That's why the Springfield-area entities listed on the cover of this newsletter have made an important commitment: We support diversity in our workplaces, which we believe also will encourage diversity in our region. That commitment helps create a strong foundation for future economic success. As an employee, you can encourage an environment that celebrates the diversity of our workforce.

Questions, comments
or information for the
Blend newsletter email:
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