

# **Newsletter of the LCHR and BRCHR**

Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the  
Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations

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## **Your Dues May be Due**

The LCHR Board has decided that since the Annual Meeting of the Council is held in June, dues will become due on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Since the BRCHR often holds a joint Annual Meeting with the LCHR, this same policy will apply for the dues of the BRCHR. Some of you may have recently sent contributions. Thus, if you have not paid dues since January 2014, you should consider that your dues are due. Several members of the LCHR and the BRCHR have given financial support beyond the \$15.00 single membership or \$20.00 family membership fee. We are very grateful for that support. Your dues are used mainly for the cost of Newsletter mailings and for the purchase of plaques for persons being honored at the Annual Humanitarian Award Programs (held by both the LCHR and the BRCH).

## **LCHR and BRCHR Hold Joint Annual Meeting with a Forum on the Common Core Curriculum and Humanitarian Awards Presentations**

The Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations held a joint annual meeting on June 7, 2014 in the Mount Pilgrim Family Life Center, 9700 Scenic Highway in Baton Rouge. The program began with a forum with the topic "The Common Core Curriculum Academic Standards for Louisiana Schools". This was followed by the awarding of the Oliver/Sigur Humanitarian Awards and the Powell/Reznikoff Award. A business meeting was then held by the LCHR.

Mrs. Gloria Jordan Hall, President of the BRCH, presided over the program. Greetings were given by Mr. Joseph Dennis, President of the LCHR.

## **Forum: The Common Core Curriculum Academic Standards for Louisiana Schools**

The topic of the Common Core Curriculum is a timely one. The forum was in the form of a panel discussion with audience participation. There was a rich array of panelist to include Mrs. Patricia Haynes Smith, LA State House of Representatives District 67, Mrs. Linda M. Johnson, LA State Board of Elementary & Secondary Education Former Board Member, and Mr. Eric B. Lewis, LA State Director of The Black Alliance for Education Options. The moderator was Mrs. Charlotte Placide, former Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Parish School System.

Mrs. Smith stated that Common Core is neither a Washington, DC nor a President Obama initiated program. She presented some history behind the program, emphasizing that it was initiated by the state governors.

For those who wish to verify the statement by Mrs. Smith, go to the National Governors Association Home Page

at <http://www.nga.org/cms/home.html>

where you will find the following statement: "The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the NGA Center and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, 2 territories, and the District of Columbia developed a common core of state standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades k-12. Today's students are preparing to enter a global economy where they will be competing for jobs with students from around the world. These standards seek to define the knowledge and skills that students should have to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic courses and in workforce training programs. Moreover, they are internationally benchmarked to ensure that all

of America's students are prepared to succeed in a global society. More information, including the final standards, frequently asked questions, and a summary of feedback can be found at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).”

The information presented by the panelist reflected the above statement. It was noted that Governor Jindal, like most other Governors, had given his support to the Common Core State Standards Initiative but recently began opposing it. The panel members agreed that the implementation of this Initiative would compare the performance of the Louisiana students nationally rather than a comparison with other students in the State. It was noted that Louisiana students rank near the bottom in reading and math skills, 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> respectively. A major concern expressed was the issue of what instrument would be used for student assessment during the coming year, State Superintendent John White fighting to have the Common Core Initiative becoming the standard, pointing out the planning and funding that has taken place for its implementation.

There was lively participation by the audience, all agreeing that Louisiana needs to raise its standards. However, concerns were expressed over the assessment method proposed with the Common Core Initiative. It was noted that the new method is to emphasize “critical thinking”. One person in the audience displayed seven booklets purchased through Amazon.com for the Math and Language Arts based on the Common Core standards. He noted that it involved tradition topics such as multiplying and dividing fractions and the various parts of speech. However, he had some concerns (as has been expressed by others) on the so called method of testing for “critical thinking”.



The Panel



An Attentive Audience

### The Oliver/Sigur Humanitarian Awards

The Presentation of Humanitarian Awards is a traditional part of the Annual Meeting. Two awards were made by the LCHR in honor of Dr. James Oliver and Msgr. Alexander O. Sigur followed by two awards being made by the BRCHR in honor of Fr. Elmer S. Powell and Rabbi Marvin M. Reznikoff.

The two awardees for the LCHR were Mrs. Gloria Trahan Linton and Mrs. Patrice Melnick. Mrs. Linton works in Lafayette as an educator and a community activist. Among her other activities, she works in helping youngsters stay drug free and works with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.



Presentation to Mrs. Gloria Trahan Linton by Mr. Joseph Dennis

Mrs. Melnick has taught creative writing at Xavier University in New Orleans and in 2010 established a non-profit organization in Grand Coteau which promotes the literary arts in the surrounding rural communities.

The two awardees for the BRCHR were Mr. Tony Pryer and Mrs. Patt Foster Roberson both residents of

Baker. Mr. Pryer is the coordinator of Volunteers in Public Schools Everybody Reads Program. Pryer conducts



Presentation to Mrs. Patrice Melnick by Mr. Joe McCarty



Presentation to Mr. Tony Pryer by Mrs. Gloria Jordan Hall



Mrs. Patt Foster Roberson Receives Award-pictured with Baker School Board Member Mrs. Doris Alexander. (Presentation made by Board Member James E. Cross)

training sessions for individuals, classes and community groups. Mrs. Roberson holds the PhD degree in Mass Communication and retired from Southern University from the Mass Communication Department. She is very active in the Baker Community, serving as a volunteer in a number of community organizations and being appointed by the Baker Mayor on several Boards. She was named Outstanding Citizen of the Year for Baker in 2008.

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