

Celebrating Diversity

Committee Members:

- Terry Miller
(chairperson)
- Keisa Brooks-
Bacote
- Terrence Charles
- Anne George
- Cynthia Smith
- April Kitchens

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Why Should We Celebrate Diversity?

In preparation for this issue, Chairperson Terry Miller sat down with center director, Rick Acton, to gain understanding of his motivation and goal in focusing on diversity.

Question: What made you decide to form the Cultural Diversity Committee?

Response: I think it's important to create a culture that celebrates diversity. My vision for the ABMHC is to create an environment that is culturally sensitive so that employees of ABMHC are able to have dialogue about culture, gender and race in a professional and healthy manner. There is an urgent need to increase cultural awareness at ABMHC and part of my responsibilities include creating a forum which allows dialogue so that hopefully through exposure, training and conversation a more positive climate can be established, one that's inclusive for all employees. We all have attitudes, values and beliefs about us that can benefit the organization.

Question: What goals do you expect to achieve by establishing cultural diversity at ABMHC?

Response: There needs to be a sense of appreciation and recognition of diversity. ABMHC needs to avoid neglect and compromise by having cultural diversity training and workshops that enrich and educate organizational members. I firmly believe that teaching tolerance can balance personal perceptions and assumptions that we all have. My motto is "Give them the tools. They may or may not do anything with them."

Mission Statement

The mission of the Celebrating Diversity Committee is to accomplish the following:

- 1. To value diversity**
- 2. Increase self-awareness**
- 3. Manage the dynamics of differences**
- 4. Acquire and utilize cultural knowledge**
- 5. Adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities we live in and serve.**



*"The highest result of
education is tolerance."
-Helen Keller*

What is Culture?

While the word culture has many different meanings and definitions, it may be defined as the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. These shared patterns identify the members of a cultural group while also distinguishing those of another group. Culture encompasses the thoughts, communication,

actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.

It is essential, as people living in a diverse nation, to view culture as something that doesn't just separate us but makes us all *belong* to not just one, but many groups.

What is Cultural Competency?

Cultural competency is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross cultural situations. Many psychologists and educators argue that human service professionals must be aware of the ways cultural competence will impact interactions and outcomes with the clients they serve.



Fun Factoids: Commonalities in American Culture

Americans eat about 700 million pounds of peanut butter and 2 billion pounds of chocolate a year.

The average American eats about seven pounds of potato chips a year.

Americans send an estimated 900 million Valentine's Day cards a year.

There are more collect calls on father's Day than any other day of the year.

On mother's day, Americans spend an average of \$329 million on candy and \$74 million on phone calls.

In 1995, Toys R Us sold more than \$9 billion of goods in the U.S. alone.

Car accidents rise 10% during the first week of daylight savings time.

85,000,000 tons of paper is used each year in the U.S!

Right behind Christmas and Thanksgiving, Super Bowl Sunday ranks as the third largest occasions for Americans to consume food.

There are 74 lobbyists for every one senator in Washington D.C.

Staff Spotlight- Terrence Charles

Date of birth: December 18th 1980

Place of birth: Port of Spain General Hospital
Trinidad and Tobago WI

Family of Origin: I grew up in a split family in which my mother and father did not live together. I have 5 sisters and one brother who passed away in 1999. I only have 1 sister whom I share both parents with. My father passed away in 1994. For the majority of my upbringing, we lived with extended family members who included uncles, aunts, cousins and my grandmother. I moved about 8 times between my families. I have 2 sisters living in Trinidad, 1 in England and 2 in the United States.

In my household: I live with my wife, and my child. I am Christian and participate in many Christian rituals with my family. Along with my wife's family, we often honor many of the Muslim Traditions. One side of my wife's family is Hindu and we engage in many Hindu customs. We eat American, Mexican, Italian, French and Spanish foods. We also eat West Indian dishes.

Hobbies: soccer, singing

Talents: Playing soccer, singing

Core values/beliefs: If you don't do it, then someone else will do it. So what is your excuse? Every door has a key; it is all about finding the right one. Everything that has happened in the past has led us up to where we are at this point in time and the rest of your destiny is determined by what you do today.

Most important life experiences: My mother leaving to go to the U.S. when I was 7 years old. Almost being washed away by a river when I was 9 years old. Father being there at my 1st soccer game at age 9 and later joining the school team that year. Having to bring water to meet basic needs while in Trinidad. Living without lights for two occasions while in Trinidad. Living through Jamaat al Muslimeen coup attempt on Trinidad and Tobago in 1990. Watching my first music competition in 1991. Passing the common entrance exam in 1992, a standardized test required to move on from primary to secondary school. Entering Morvant Laventille Secondary School and joining the soccer team. Being

withdrawn from soccer by my uncle. Sleeping in my Uncle's church for different events because he was a pastor. Joining Boy Scouts in 1992 and being able to earn various badges. Rejoining Soccer in 1994. My father passing away in 1994. Winning a national soccer Championship in 1995 and playing at the highest level of secondary school soccer. Almost breaking my foot in 1996. Coming to the United States in 1998. Not seeing my mother for 10 years. Starting College in New York in 1998. Obtaining a Scholarship at USCA in 2000. Graduating from college 2003. Having my daughter in 2004. Getting married in 2007 and later starting graduate school in that year.

Most influential person/people in my life: Earl Anatol (Soccer Manager), Grandmother, Father, Mother, Uncle

Goals/Missions in life: Acquire my PHD, open some residential treatment programs for troubled teens, and open some residential treatment facilities throughout the Caribbean.



"For the majority of my upbringing, we lived with extended family members who included uncles, aunts, cousins and my grandmother."

A Spiritual Way to Bring in the New Year



Watch Night services provide a spiritual way to bring in New Year

The typical image of New Year's Eve is a group of revelers with party hats and noisemakers, ringing in the new year with champagne and "Auld Lang Syne." But on that same night, churches welcome the coming year in a different way, with a Watch Night service.

Some say that Watch Night services can be traced back to a sect of Christians known as the Moravians in Herrnhut, Saxony, in 1732.

Methodism founder John Wesley adopted Watch Night services in the mid-18th century, sometimes calling them Covenant Renewal services. The original services were spontaneous prayer services designed to deepen the spiritual life of Methodists. The service is loosely constructed with singing, spontaneous prayers and testimonials, and readings.

As Rev. Cynthia Wilson, an Atlanta-based worship leader noted, Watch Night services have special significance in the African-American community,

where they date back to the days of slavery. "At the end of the year, owners tallied their property and often sold slaves to pay debts," Wilson said. Sometimes they were separated, so New Year's Eve was often the last night a family of slaves would be together.

Watch Night service took on even more significance during the Civil War when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. It was supposed to take effect

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Fireworks are a major part of New Year's celebrations in diverse communities all over the world.

Other New Year's Traditions

New Year's Eve or Old Year's Night is on 31 December, the final day of the Gregorian year, and the day before New Year's Day. In modern Western practice, New Year's Eve is celebrated with parties and social gatherings spanning the transition of the year at midnight. Many cultures use fireworks and other forms of noise-making in part of the celebration.

New Year's Eve is a major event in Las Vegas, Nevada, where the Las Vegas Strip is shut down as several hundred thousand people party. New Year's Eve is traditionally the busiest day of the year at Walt Disney World in Florida and Disneyland in California, where the parks stay open late and the usual nightly fireworks are supplemented by an additional New Year's Eve-specific show at midnight. In New Orleans, Louisiana, another of the most popular New Year celebration venues in North America, similar crowds of hundreds of thousands gather in the French Quarter, particularly on Bourbon Street and Canal Street, to celebrate the New Year. Of course, one of the most-watched celebrations is in New York City's Town Square.

Many cities also celebrate First Night, a non-alcohol family-friendly New Year's Celebration, generally featuring performing artists, community events, parades, and fireworks displays. First Night began in Boston in 1976 and is now found in over 60 cities nationwide.

Chinese New Year or Spring Festival is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. The festival begins on the first day of the first month in the Chinese calendar and ends on the 15th. People celebrate with dragon dances, lion dances, fireworks, family gatherings, family meals, visiting friends and giving red envelopes.

Teaching Youth Tolerance

Marco Torres
Corona High School
Corona, California

It's not uncommon to hear students repeating biased language they've heard. Left unchallenged, comments like this can nibble away at our students, tearing down the futures they've envisioned for themselves.

I created an activity that isolates several of the acts of intolerance that so frequently exist in the lives of my students. I wrote short narratives that ask students to imagine themselves in scenarios of everyday bigotry, prompting them to think about how best to address these acts of intolerance. My narratives cover these topics:

That's so gay, retarded or ghetto: Using identity labels as put-downs or in a negative context

"Girls ain't nothin' but..." objectification of females by males-from music videos to playground chatter

My iPhone and your clothes from Wal-Mart: Perceptions of what's cool" and what's not cool and the class privilege that underlies these ideas

The "schoolboy" and the schoolgirl" the alienation of high-performing students

My uncle the racist: Standing up to racist family members

Being different in a place where sameness is required: Situations in which physical appearance, sexual orientation or religious belief could lead to ostracism

Students are grouped and asked to talk five to ten minutes about how best to respond. Giving students time, support and guidance to formulate responses ahead of time gives them awareness and confidence to speak up for themselves and one another.



Teen Texting

Millions of today's teenagers are caught up in this quick communication craze that has inspired everything from a new cyber language to funny ads for cell phone companies. Spurred by the unlimited texting plans offered by carriers like AT&T and Verizon Wireless, American teenagers sent and received an average of 2,272 text messages per month in the fourth quarter of 2008. For many parents, safety hazards and outrageous bills are a major concern.

And it's not just how much they're texting that baffles parents: It's the language they're using. Text speech is designed to be quick and easy. Some common abbreviations -- think OMG (oh my God) and LOL (laughing out loud) -- are now part of our vernacular. But other codes, like PAW (parents are watching) and LMIRL (let's meet in real life) are a way to KPC (keep parent clueless) -- and add to texting's appeal. Psychologists cite many advantages & disadvantages to teen

texting. They caution parents to know their teen's texting habits, beware of hidden fees, and learn the lingo.

Common Abbreviations:
LOL = Laughing Out Loud
TTYL = Talk to You Later
BRB = Be Right Back
OMG = Oh My Goodness
WTF = What The F***
B2W = Back to Work
L8R = Later
PIR = Parents In Room
OTB = Off to Bed
^5 = High Five
CU = See You



American teenagers sent and received an average of 2,272 text messages per month in the fourth quarter of 2008.

**ABMHC
Diversity Committee**

1135 Gregg Hwy
Aiken, SC 29801

PHONE:
(803) 641-7700

FAX:
(803) 641-7713

E-MAIL:
tbm37@scdmh.org
kbb14@scdmh.org

Empanadas – Spain and South America

1 pound of ground beef 1 Tbsp olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped 1 egg, beaten

Ready made puff pastry sheets

White Sauce: 1/3 cup of butter

1/3 cup of plain flour 1.5 cups of milk

¾ cup of grated cheese Pinch of nutmeg

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan, cook onion until soft. Add beef, stirring until brown. Drain excess fat from pan. Allow meat mixture to cool. Melt butter in a small saucepan; add flour stirring over heat until mixture bubbles and thickens. Remove from heat; gradually stir in milk. Return to heat and continue cooking until mixture boils and thickens. Remove from heat; stir in cheese and nutmeg. Stir cheese sauce into meat mixture. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place baking paper on large oven tray. Cut sheet of pastry into four squares. Use about four or five pastry sheets (depends on how much meat you use). Place tablespoon of meat mixture on center of pastry square. Fold pastry over to enclose meat filling. Press edges together with a fork to seal. Place empanadas on tray and brush with beaten egg. Fork holes on top. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Enjoy – can be eaten hot or cold!

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Jan. 1, 1863. On “Freedom’s Eve” slaves came together in churches and private homes awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had actually become law. Then, at the stroke of midnight, it was January 1, 1863, and all slaves in the Confederate States were declared

legally free. When the news was received, there were prayers, shouts and songs of joy as people fell to their knees and thanked God. African Americans have gathered in churches annually on New Year’s Eve since that time, praising God for bringing them safely through another year.

Although the activities & rituals may vary from church to church, Watch Night services are seen as a time for celebration, recommitment, renewal, and thanksgiving.

References

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