

Commission Selects 2010 Social Justice Award Recipients

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At its regular monthly meeting the Human Relations Commission selected five recipients for its annual Human Relations Social Justice Awards for 2010. The Social Justice Awards were established by the Commission to recognize programs and individuals that provide exemplary service to the community to promote equal opportunity and social justice for all.

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In Education the award went to the **Holland Public Schools VR Tech School**. During its first year the school expected about 60 students to participate but more than double the number of students enrolled. This educational program is a true example of social justice, as it has encouraged many students who had fallen behind to catch up on their school credits and others who have dropped out to return and work on their diploma

In Employment, the award went to the **Christ Memorial Church Open Arms Ministry and The Escape Program** in recognition for providing programming for youth and family mentorships that lead to drug treatment, education, job skills training, gang prevention and other needs. The programs act as an intermediary between employers and potential employees helping to develop good working relationships.

For Government and Community Relations the Commission selected **Justice For Our Neighbors** (JFON) for providing a faith-driven ministry that is welcoming to immigrants into our community and churches by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services, education, and advocacy to more than 300 clients from 35 countries since 2006. JFON is a joint project of First United Methodist Church of Holland, First United Methodist Church of Grand Rapids, West Michigan Conference, and the national United Methodist Committee of Relief.

The Housing award went to the **Community Action House Foreclosure Prevention Program** for their efforts to address the foreclosure crisis by assisting homeowners to understand the foreclosure process and assist homeowners to save their homes. Housing Case Managers meet with families to provide budget counseling and assist them to negotiate with mortgage companies and to arrange loan modifications to avoid foreclosure.

Finally, the Youth award went to **Chris Melton** for his work to break down barriers for handicapped athletes and serving as a personal inspiration for others with disabilities. As a wheelchair bound person, Chris is a tennis player on the Zeeland Chix High School tennis team and is believed to be the first tennis player who uses a wheelchair to play on an able-bodied high school team in Michigan. Chris hopes that his hard work and determined attitude to break down barriers for handicapped athletes serves as an inspiration for others with disabilities to try new activities themselves.

The public is invited to join the Human Relations Commission in honoring the five award recipients at the City Council meeting to be held on Wednesday, January 19, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. with a reception to follow.

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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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