Human Relations Selects 2011 Social Justice Award Recipients

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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At its regular monthly meeting the Human Relations Commission selected four (4) recipients for its annual Human Relations Social Justice Awards for 2011. 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. In addition, the HRC selected its first recipient for its “Distinguished Community Service Award”.

In **Education** the award went to the **Ready for School initiative**. This program is a Holland/Zeeland initiative ensuring that every child from birth enters kindergarten prepared to succeed. The goal of Ready for School is to increase the percent of entering kindergartners who meet benchmark criteria of readiness from 55% in 2010 to 75% by 2015. The focus of the initiative is the approximately 10,000 children in the Holland/Zeeland area from birth to age five.

For **Housing**, the HRC selected the **City of Holland’s Ourstreet and Neighborhood Liaison Programs**. These city programs have worked diligently together to make our city neighborhoods more friendly, safe and attractive. Through the efforts of the Ourstreet Program the city has invested and improved housing for many low income families and in partnership with the Neighborhood Liaison Program has been instrumental in promoting more safe, healthy, peaceful and attractive neighborhoods.

For **Government and Community Relations** the Commission selected **Holland Is Ready** for its efforts this past year in helping the Holland area in non-confrontational ways to educate the public about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues. This was done by sponsoring the 2010-2011 film series about GLBT people while actively supporting the Human Relations Commission’s efforts to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the city’s anti-discrimination ordinances and policies. Holland Is Ready is a group of educators, business, religious and community leaders coming together to find ways to make the Holland community more inclusive.

The **Youth** award went to **Timmy Kim**, a senior at West Ottawa High School, who has positively affected the lives of a variety of people from various backgrounds. Timmy spends much of his time with the West Ottawa Cultural Technology Environmental Exchange program fixing computers to be taken to Cameroon. He is also a member of the PAL’s organization mentoring middle school kids with various struggles. Besides keeping up with his academic obligations and school sports, Timmy still finds time to be a youth leader with Wyldlife and Younglife groups. Timmy Kim works with a diverse array of people which is evident by the spectrum of the people he devotes his time to.

Finally, the Human Relations Commission selected **Rebecca “Becky” Arenas** to be the first recipient of its **“Distinguished Community Service Award”** awarded posthumously in recognition of a life time of service to the Holland Community in the areas of Housing, Education, Employment, Government/Community Relations, and Youth, tirelessly promoting civic engagement, equality and social Justice for all.

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 18, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. with a reception to follow.

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