

MADISON'S FIRST DISABILITY SUMMIT: Looking Forward Together



Disability Pride 2023 enjoyed great weather and record turnout.

by Donna Collingwood

By all standards, Madison's First Disability Summit was a success. The disability community showed up, people were engaged, forward looking, and interested in working with City staff in new ways.

The two-day virtual event had live captioning, four spoken languages, and sign language interpretation. It was one of the first City events for the disability community with so much language access built in, per Rebecca Hoyt, Disability Rights and Services Specialist and event organizer.

The objectives of the Summit were to inform the development of a City plan about:

1. Priorities of the disability community,
2. Decision-making principles for the City that ensure people with disabilities can participate in and inform processes, and
3. Ways to better connect diverse Disabled residents with City staff, policy makers, and each other.

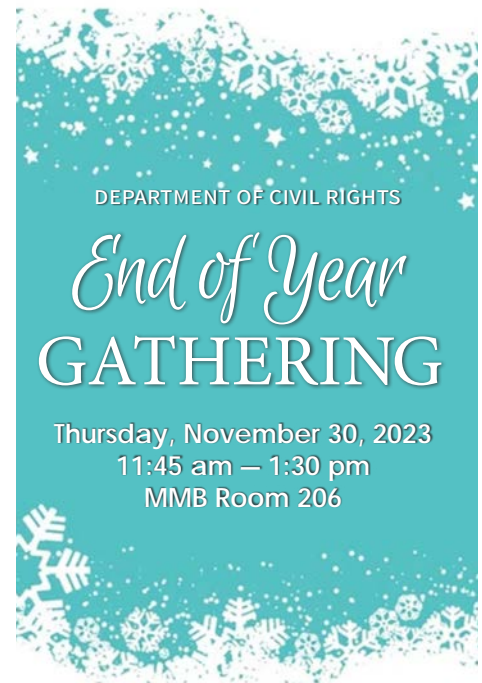
These items were all addressed at the Summit, mostly in breakout room discussions. On the first day, break outs were based on identity and on the second day the break outs were topic based.

"People really felt comfortable to go deep in the comments that they gave, and really were very generous in terms of sharing their vulnerability with us," Rebecca said. She heard from attendees that they

wanted more spaces like the summit to have these conversations.

Rebecca had ample feedback, and is prioritizing more readily attainable things like: including mask mirroring guidance in staff emails about flu season, multi-language way finding in City and County buildings, making accessible, gender-inclusive restrooms easier to find, and increasing ease-of-use of paratransit services.

The larger plan development will happen over time. Rebecca would like to have a well-developed plan drafted by the anniversary of the Summit, but it's not going to come together quickly. "We want to be intentional and thoughtful about



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MADISON SENIOR CENTER 40TH ANNIVERSARY: Honoring and Celebrating the Aging Community

The Madison Senior Center celebrated their 40th Anniversary on September 21. Attendance was estimated at 150 and the crowd was diverse and engaged.

Among the various food offerings were empanadas, Hmong egg rolls, and mochi sesame balls. Some of the Hmong people in attendance had never been to a City of Madison event, according to Ze Yang, Hmong Bilingual Community Connector. Seeing traditional Hmong food items made them feel included, she said.

“Everyone seemed to enjoy the cultural performances,” noted Holly Chen, Chinese Bilingual Community Connector.

After a performance by a Chinese dance group, Ze overheard Hmong community members discuss starting a Hmong dance group to perform at special occasions. It was noted that a dance group would be a good thing for the winter when they are unable to tend their gardens.

The Community Connectors worked with Community Development Division staff on their outreach for this and future events.



Attendance was estimated at 150.

Enoch Melgarejo, Spanish Bilingual Community Connector, shared that feedback was positive regarding the city putting more interest and making the senior center programming and services more appealing to diverse communities. They did note a need for free transportation and interpretation services to support participation.

The Madison Senior Center is owned and operated by the city, part of the Community Development Division. Located in the heart of downtown Madison, it has been an anchor for older adults since 1983. As

the aging population in Madison continues to grow, it is the City’s goal to build a model for service delivery that responds to the increasing diversity within our aging community. ■■



Left: A Chinese dance troupe performed at the event. Below left: Many attendees were new to the Senior Center and learned about their programs. Below right: Hmong Community Connector (lower right) Ze Yang coordinated rides on Metro transit for community members.



Disability Summit (continued)

doing it well as opposed to quickly,” she said.

The most prominent themes from the Summit were accessible and affordable housing, transportation, and people’s sense of agency in our processes. There was also feedback around representation, consistency of language access services, and the ways people are able to participate in conversations that are important to them, according to Rebecca.

“I received a lot of feedback about how much it meant to have a Disability Summit in our city,” said Rebecca. She also noted that the Summit was centered around the annual Disability Pride event, and visioning hope and community were central themes. Rebecca said it was great to have so many legislators (Lt Governor Rodriguez, Senator Agard, Representatives Joers, Stubbs, Hong, Anderson, and Subek) engaged in conversations about disability justice as well as community. 🇺🇸

WANDA FULLMORE INTERN: Thank you Phoebe

“Working alongside adults who commit themselves to serving the community has made me even more interested in a career path in government,” said Phoebe Sium, DCR’s 2023 Wanda Fullmore intern. “I recommend it to any high school student looking to gain work experience, and to learn more about the city :),” she said (emoji included).



Phoebe said she learned a lot about the City and the role of government at the municipal level. She was surprised to learn how various City departments collaborated and worked together on projects and initiatives.

Phoebe plans to attend college next fall, and double major in International relations and either finance or quantitative economics. She loves to do almost anything outdoors, including golf, and is on the golf team at Vel Phillips Memorial High School.

“Getting to witness the impact of initiatives and projects, like how the Disability Summit brought an excited and diverse community to celebrate Disability Pride was really inspiring,” she said.

“Phoebe was a positive presence in the office and a quick learner,” according to Michealyn Gibson, who supervised her. It was a good experience for everyone involved. 🇺🇸

NEWS & VIEWS

Thanks for reading! We hope you enjoyed this content and we want to hear your feedback for future issues.

We’d like to hear from you regarding racial equity and social justice in your work or your department.

Contact newsletter editor Donna Collingwood at dcollingwood@cityofmadison.com



Racial Equity
& Social Justice Initiative



Another Successful Combined Campaign

DCR staff organized events to raise money for the Combined Campaign. Left, soups and stews event and right, ice cream social. DCR’s Combined Campaign coordinators (Julie Austin and Chelsea Shult) reported \$2,000 in contributions from DCR in 2023.



KRISTY'S CORNER:

Reflections from the YWCA and GARE Leadership Convening

We were excited and grateful to partner with our friends and partners in justice at the YWCA Madison for their annual Racial Justice Summit. This year's theme was "Creating New Possibilities for Intersectional Racial Justice, Collective Healing, and Liberation" and that we did! About 70 employees from the City of Madison and Public Health of Madison & Dane County attended the Summit which was likely the largest contingency from any one organization. Staff who attended mentioned feeling revitalized, a sense of hope, community, and gratitude to be able to actively immerse in such an embodied experience.

I was honored to host a session during the in-person day. The session was titled "Building a DESIRABLE Movement: Inviting individual strengths and collective power for organizational change." I had my 20



It was a family affair! Geraldine Paredes Vasquez YWCA Race & Gender Equity Director, Geri's mother (to her right), keynote speaker Autumn Brown, Kristy Kumar, Equity and Social Justice Manager, and her son on the Monona Terrace Rooftop.

sets of handouts as I walked into a huge room with about 200 people! It seems there is interest in building a desirable movement for equity and social justice. I'm excited to continue this conversation in our work at the City.

City Team Attends GARE Leadership Summit

Tariq Saqqaf, Lourdes Shanjani, Bonnie Chang, and I from the City of Madison attended the Government Alliance for Race and Equity's (GARE) first ever Leadership Summit in September, 2023, in Pine Mountain, Georgia. We came away with local connections and insights we are excited to share.

We explored themes like nurturing and sustaining leadership and generating strategies to advance racial equity. We had wide-ranging conversations on the issues we've encountered, the road we have ahead, and how to foster resilience. Attendees from all over the country

collectively cultivated and deepened relationships and shared best practices.

Attendees shared our ideas on what we as government workers can do to ensure co-governance models are equitable, sustainable, and impactful for communities. ■■



Photos (above) from the 60th Anniversary Celebration November 11

60 Years of Civil Rights in Madison

The City of Madison, Equal Opportunity Commission invited the community to a celebration reception, November 11 at The Atrium at 2300 S. Park St. Madison.

Members of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Department of Civil Rights, and the community honored 60 years of civil rights efforts within the City of Madison.

We also celebrated the 60th anniversary of the City of Madison Equal Opportunities Ordinance which was signed in December of 1963. This years' celebration included Meeting the Current Equal Opportunities Commission, Music, Food Dance, artists from "Our Town Everywhere." and free books. ■■

(From left) Lourdes Shanjani, Tariq Saqqaf, Bonnie Chang, and kristy kumar at GARE Convening.