

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Human Rights Commission Features Essay and Art Contests Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Michigan City, IN (December 22, 2003) –Nancy Widelski, Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission, reminds elementary through high school students and their families, educators and churches that the Commission is featuring essay and art contests as part of the Human Rights program, “Raise Your Standards, Not Your Fists.”

Widelski said, “This year-long program includes many exciting events and activities. The first is an essay and art contest for Martin Luther King Day. Students in all Michigan City elementary and middle schools are eligible for the art contest, and middle, junior high and high school students are able to participate in the essay contest.”

Students will compete for prizes in both contests. “The 1st place winner of the essay contest,” said Widelski, “will win a \$500 savings bond, a one-year membership to the YMCA and a one-year family membership to the Washington Park Zoo. The 2nd place essay contest winner will receive a \$100 savings bond, and the 3rd place winner will receive a \$50 savings bond.”

The 1st place art contest winner will receive a \$200 savings bond, a one-year membership to the YMCA and a one-year family membership to the Washington Park Zoo. The 2nd place art contest winner will receive a \$50 savings bond, and the 3rd place winner will receive a \$25 savings bond.

“All participants will receive a “Raise Your Standards, Not Your Fists” t-shirt, and all essays and art entries will be on the Human Rights Department pages of the city website during the entire campaign,” Widelski said. “The original art entries will be displayed at City Hall in February.”

The art and essay contests are sponsored by the Human Rights Commission, Horizon Bank, The News-Dispatch, the Michigan City YMCA, the Michigan City Area Schools , and the Washington Park Zoo.

The essay and art contests are intended to provide an opportunity for educators, parents, and clergy to talk with children about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., his work and his dreams, as well as the concept of “Raise Your Standards, Not Your Fists.”

Widelski said, “Most of our students have witnessed or participated in a fight during lunch, an argument in the locker room, or an uncomfortable debate during class. They’ve seen fights and arguments in their neighborhoods and on their televisions. Violence in their lives isn't just confined to being physical; it also deals with verbal conflict. The essay and art contests and our year-long campaign will provide families, schools and churches with opportunities to discuss violence and our individual responses to it with our community’s children and young adults.”

The rules and entry forms for both the essay and arts contests are available online at www.emichigancity.com and at all local schools. “We hope to have a lot of participants in these contests,” Widelski said. “We are really interested in hearing what our youth have to say about Dr. King and his teachings and how they illustrate those teachings in art.”

For more information about the “Raise Your Standards, Not Your Fists” campaign,
contact Nancy Widelski at 219/873-1429 or via e-mail at nancyw@emichigancity.com.

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