

## **Human Rights Commission**

The Human Rights Commission was started in 1969. The purpose of the Human Rights Commission is to ensure that all Red Wing residents may participate equally and fully in the human experience. The Commission actively works to assure all city policies and practices do not discriminate on any basis, including immigrant or refugee status

A public interest in starting a Human Rights Commission was raised in 1968. At a community gathering held September 18, 1966. Frank Kent, Commissioner of Human Rights of the state of Minnesota, spoke to a group of Citizens of Red Wing. After the Meeting interest was raised by multiple groups on the founding of a Human Rights Commission. At the October 3, 1968 city council meeting Mayor Demetrius Jelatis raised the idea that there was interest from the community of starting a Human Rights Commission. The idea was forwarded to the Ordinance Committee for further study on the issues the Human Rights Commission would be dealing with.

In 1969 at both the February 6 and March 6 City Council Meetings letters were submitted as well as citizens coming to the council meeting. Both were urging the council to create a Human Rights Commission in Red Wing. At the June 5, 1969 Council Meeting Ordinance No. 571 was accepted; creating the Human Rights Commission of Red Wing. Currently the Human Rights Commission has an eight members appointed by the mayor and approved by the council.

A notable program that the Human Rights Commission has started is the Amos Owen Award. Since 2001, the annual Amos Owen Award has recognized an individual in the Red Wing community for his/her work in promoting and ensuring others' human rights. The award's namesake was a Prairie Island Mdewakanton elder and spiritual leader who worked tirelessly to

preserve Dakota language and culture. The Human Rights Commission chooses the recipients of the award.

Two of the services that the commission provides the community is to provide community members making discrimination complaints with information on possible actions available to them through the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. The Commission also Create a Bias/Hate Crime Response Plan The purpose of this plan is to establish a local response showing strong community support for the victims of any bias or hate crime and identifies the steps by which the Commission provides support to such victims. The Commission aims to demonstrate leadership in the community to prevent bias and hate crimes through education and collaborative community action against prejudice and bigotry.