



**Educate. Embrace. Empower.**

*One Year of Growing Together*

# **Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Committee Newsletter**

**First Anniversary Issue | July 2021**

**Our Mission:** Educate, Embrace and Empower a workplace of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion



# Introduction to this Issue

*from Theresa Thomas, DEI Committee Chair*

I've had the same framed poster in my office for more than 15 years of my career. It says *Carpe Diem* – “seize the day”. These words remind me to make the most of the 24 hours allotted me each day. Time does not discriminate; we are all given the same number of hours within the day. How we decide to use them determines how satisfied we are at the end of the day – have we truly seized the day?

This past year, as Chair of the DEI Committee, I have discovered a new motto that will hopefully soon be hanging in my office: *Seize the Opportunity*. My work on the DEI Committee has challenged me to seize the opportunity to grow in awareness, acceptance and appreciation.

**Diversity** provides the opportunity to gain awareness of how my experience limits my understanding of the world. I learned that everyone's journey is important. Facts can be interpreted to mean different things to different people, and difference does not mean that we are enemies. I plan to seize every opportunity to become aware of the diversity that surrounds me in the community where I live and in the workplace where I am honored to be an employee.

**Equality** provides the opportunity for acceptance. I should never view anyone as less valuable than another person simply based on what I see. “Don't judge a book by its cover” is good advice. Open the book to read the first chapter – you may be surprised by the content and continue to read! Viewing others first with the lens that we are all equal allows us to share, benefit from and grow an environment of welcome for all we encounter. I will seize the opportunity to ensure equality of trust, support and understanding for all those I meet. I owe it to my community and coworkers.

**Inclusion** provides the opportunity to show appreciation. Let everyone participate, learning to include others in moments of success and ask for help during challenging moments builds a sense of trust and unity. Such appreciation is an outward sign of what is felt in the heart and thought in the mind. Intentionally include someone who may think and act differently, and simply appreciate that they are not you. Can you imagine how strange the world would be if everyone was named Theresa? Life would be most boring! I pledge to seize the opportunity to appreciate different cultures, customs and preferences because I would like to be included in the community where I live and the workplace where I have chosen to spend at least eight of my 24 hours every weekday.

*Continued on next page.*



# Introduction to this Issue

*from Theresa Thomas, DEI Committee Chair*

Today, I ask myself how could I think so superficially, remain so secluded and distrust so quickly? I am happy to say, I have grown since the formation of the DEI Committee. I can clearly see how my misconceptions of people and stereotyping led to a fear of inclusion. I am not where I long to be, but I am willing to allow my thoughts and actions to be challenged for the better.

I love being on this journey with you. Together we are learning, growing and impacting our communities and Goodwin House, becoming even greater champions of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. If you happen to be sitting on the sidelines cheering, join us in becoming change agents for diversity!

- Theresa

## Reflections on One Year of the DEI Committee

When I decided to join the DEI Committee, I was not sure what to expect or what the goals of the committee were. I remember our first meeting and realized that I had judged some of the team members based on my own life experiences. A year later, I have not only grown personally and professionally, I also feel positive about the changes the committee has been able to contribute to the organization, residents and staff. I have learned so much about the residents and staff on the committee and believe I have a bond with individuals I would never have reached out to if not for our DEI efforts.

**- Beth Robinson, GHAH Staff Member & Member of the DEI Committee**

After a year on the DEI, I have learned to be patient with the pace of change that is often slower than I'd like, both in the world and at Goodwin House! But changes are being made and it is gratifying to see. My most enlightening experience this year was the support and turnout for the Pride Parade at both houses, but especially at GHBC! To see the joy with which GHBC residents embraced that event meant a great deal.

The great honor of this year was to be asked to do the "Living with Pride at Any Age" webinar with my son, Ted. We were delighted to be asked to share our knowledge and our experiences. (You can watch the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/L60qqvtUQzE>)

To those who may feel that Pride Month - or any other sort of special month - is something that is "shoved in their faces," I would like to say, "let's talk." I'd be happy to chat with you.

**- Carol Lewis, GHBC Resident & Member of the DEI Committee**

# Reflections on One Year of the DEI Committee

As our world shifts and shrinks, we all have had to address the issues of diversity. The news media is always ready to tell us when it is done badly. Cultural anger is stoked when inclusion is denied or granted reluctantly. Education about these matters is rife with excuses, denials and moral relativism. The Goodwin House DEI Committee has been an exception to the norm in its first year of existence. Diversity has been named as a value and sought after for its own sake. The principles of inclusion have been carefully applied across the wide spectrum of residents, staff and board leadership. Education has worn both personal and professional faces. Not everything has been done well, but everything has been done with a desire to “respect the dignity of every human being.” I have been honored to be part of such an effort in its inaugural year and look forward to benefitting from its work in the years to come.

**- Frank Wade, GHA Resident & Member of the DEI Committee**

What a gift the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion committee has been to the Goodwin House community and to me personally. The committee has the hallmarks of a successful venture: strong mission, vital leadership and strategic vision. Those factors, combined with creativity and hard work, have provided Goodwin House with a year of awakening and expanded outlook about how diversity, equality and inclusion exist at Goodwin House, why it is essential and what hopes the future will unfold. Many steps forward have been taken, and many more are promised in the journey ahead.

**- Mary Lewis Hix, Chair of the Goodwin House Board of Trustees & Member of the DEI Committee**

Being a part of the DEI committee this past year has meant more to me than I could have imagined. From meeting new staff members and being able to greet them in the halls by name to connecting with residents from both communities, the camaraderie between us all has grown so much over the last year. I have always considered myself as being open and accepting of others, but being a part of DEI has enhanced my understanding of diversity and how we can move forward as one to create equality for all. I have a better understanding of what Cultural Appropriation is and have had several instances where I have witnessed it and have been able to speak up. The DEI Committee gave me that voice. Being on this committee has ignited a fire inside me to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves and be a voice for change and equality. My heart is so full from all I have learned this year. I strive daily to learn more and always keep my eyes and heart open to those from different cultures, religion, sexual orientation and more. I am so thankful for the DEI Committee and how it is helping me grow awareness for diversity and inclusion in our Goodwin House Community, surrounding area and my personal day to day life.

**- Elizabeth Whitehouse, GHBC Cultural Arts and Events Manager & Member of the DEI Committee**

# Update from Leadership

## Fostering Connection & Engagement

**Contributors: Elizabeth Whitehouse, Frank Wade and Holly Hanisian**

The DEI Committee identified four areas of focus that would provide the greatest impact of our Diversity journey as Leadership, Marketing, Sales and Communication, Human Resources and Employee Engagement.

Over the last six months members of the DEI Committee have worked closely with representatives of our Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to expand our diversity efforts. The following reports highlight some current successes and future initiatives. We are grateful to Holly Hanisian, Lindsay Hutter and Fran Casey for their willingness to listen and share with DEI. Everything is better when we can seek to understand and collaborate on paths forward.

**Members of our Strategy Team attended a 3-part seminar by LeadingAge.** They found the materials and training helpful, and would like to see how they can apply what they learned to Goodwin House. Role playing exercises were among the concepts that are under consideration for implementation at Goodwin House.

**Current and next steps in DEI training include:**

- Once a month, Rob Liebreich meets with Linda Lateana, Holly Hanisian, Fran Casey and Lindsay Hutter to focus on the efforts of DEI training for Goodwin House and ways to improve DEI for staff and residents.
- Fran is considering bringing in a DEI trainer for the SLT and Strategy Team, hopefully starting late summer.
- Rob will attend each day New Employee Orientation (NEO) day to meet new staff members.
- Goodwin House will roll out educational resources:
  - A lot of people may not have a basic understanding of certain issues or topics. For example; people may not know the proper terminology for those who identify as trans or LGBTQ+, but may be uncomfortable to ask for clarification due to fear of appearing to be insulting or uneducated. We would like to provide resources on a variety of topics to help create a knowledge base and a safe place for people to get informed.

# Update from Marketing & Sales

## Spreading the Goodwin House Welcome to More Diverse Older Adults!

### **Contributors: Theresa Thomas, Carol Lewis and Lindsay Hutter**

To support the goal of attracting a more diverse resident base, the Sales Department and the Marketing & Communications Department have been working with the DEI Committee and other departments within Goodwin House to expand our outreach.

Some of our outreach has focused on connecting with organizations that represent older adults in diverse populations. Here are a few examples of our recent outreach:

- With thanks to GHBC resident Marietta Tanner for her guidance and support, we reached out to the Northern Virginia chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority (an international service organization for African American women). Goodwin House offered to be a resource for aging services and to host an information session for Alpha Kappa Alpha members this fall.
- With thanks to GHBC resident George Moose, a retired U.S. Ambassador, for his guidance and support, we continued our discussions with the Association of Black American Ambassadors and have had follow up conversations with a few of the members of this association who expressed an interest in the Goodwin House Life Plan Communities.
- With thanks to GHAAH Director of Member Services Beth Robinson who came forward with the idea, Goodwin House hosted a webinar titled “Let’s Rejoin Society with Confidence” on June 23 that was offered to a range of faith-based and nonprofit organizations that support older adults of diversity. The purpose of the webinar was to help older adults reclaim their physical, emotional and mental health while safely resuming the lifestyle they enjoyed pre-pandemic. Watch the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/5MQWDIpsUks>

Other outreach efforts this spring and summer focused on securing local news media coverage of our diversity work. In all, we secured more a dozen news stories on our DEI efforts. Highlights include:

- ***The Washington Informer (May 21, 2021)***: This news article features the Black and African-American Outreach Guide published by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). Goodwin House Hospice Chaplain Arion Lillard-Green is a co-author of the guide. <https://bit.ly/black-outreach-guide>
- ***The Washington Post, (June 21, 2021)***: This high-profile feature story is about the GHA Pride Parade and quotes residents and GHAAH members who participated in the parade. <https://bit.ly/gha-pride-parade>
- ***The Zebra (June 12, 2021)***: This article highlights the GHBC Pride Parade and quotes residents who participated in the parade. <https://bit.ly/ghbc-pride-parade>

# Update from Human Resources

## Increasing Staff Diversity

### **Contributor: Fran Casey**

Every day brings new opportunities to integrate the principles of DEI into our workplace. We continue to strive for a more diverse leadership team and are pleased that 44% of staff members included in this group self-identify as non-white, from another country or two or more ethnicities.

On July 27, we launched the first of a two-part series titled Sensitivity in the Workplace. This program addresses cultural differences, biases, micro-aggressions, stereotyping, communication fallacies and the power of words. The rollout of this program began with our senior leaders, and we intend to expand it to others throughout the organization.

We continue toward our goal to have all staff attend SAGECare training for LGBT+ competency. This training is part of our on-boarding process for new staff members, and it is required prior to starting a job at Goodwin House. Now that we are able to hold in-person meetings, we will provide this specialized training to more staff in the coming weeks. We hope to reach the goal of 80% of staff trained by the end of October.

In the words of Maya Angelou: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." Through our DEI work, we are actively seeking the knowledge we need to do better, so our goal is to continue engaging all staff in an education process with a focus on inclusivity.

# Update on Staff Engagement

## Let's Develop Understanding of Different Cultures by Learning About One Another

### **Contributors: Theresa Thomas and Nathalia Salvatierra**

The DEI Committee continues to partner with staff by seeking contributions to our Friday Thoughts. We are pleased that staff from many departments have used their pens to highlight a wide variety of celebrations, concerns and perspectives. We look forward to increasing this important part of the DEI efforts of to engage our staff.

DEI is excited to support the GHI Parade of Cultures & Traditions. Staff and residents can share their culture through attire or by displaying collectibles from places they have visited or are honored to call home. Join us at GHBC on August 6 at 2:30 p.m. for a display and GHA on August 13 at 2:00 p.m. for a parade and display.

DEI is committed to providing opportunities to expand our knowledge, acceptance and inclusion of all cultures, genders, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs. We celebrate our differences because together we create a great place to live and work.

## Special Article:

### *Celebrating Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha*

**By Heba Sikander**

Every year Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. These are the most important holidays in Islam.

Eid al-Fitr means “festival of breaking the fast”. This Eid is celebrated immediately after a month of fasting – a period called Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to not only fast from dawn to sunset, but to also donate to charities and to those in need. During this month, many schools and businesses are closed in predominantly Muslim countries. Social gatherings are popular during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, as these observances bring together the Muslim communities for prayer and festivities.

Eid al-Adha means “feast of the sacrifice”. During this Eid, many Muslims perform the Hajj pilgrimage, an annual observance that all Muslims are encouraged to perform at least once in their lifetime. The Hajj is one of the main five pillars in Islam. Muslims from all over the world go to Mecca, Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj. Eid al-Adha falls on the last day of the Hajj. During Eid al-Adha, a sheep is sacrificed and fed to those in need, a ceremony unique to this Eid.

Both Eid celebrations are based on the lunar calendar. Every year the dates of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are different due to the 11-day difference between the lunar calendar and the solar calendar. On the day of both Eids, Muslims gather together with family and friends to feast, pray and celebrate!

## Upcoming Topics & Events

### **Friday Thoughts for August**

- Celebrating Indigenous People’s Day
- Understanding Ageism

### **Upcoming Webinars**

- From Here to There—A Year in Review: with GHA and GHBC Chaplains and Resident Spiritual Life Committee Chairs (TBD)
- Healing Across Religious Beliefs: with GHA and GHBC Chaplains and local religious leaders (TBD)