



City of Palms

***Mayor's Diversity & Inclusion
Advisory Committee
2019***

Mayor's Message

At the time of writing this message, our city's population is approaching 88,000 residents and growing very rapidly. With this growth, it is important that we pause and take stock of the extraordinary diversity we are blessed to have. Recently published statistics of our demographics indicate that we have Caucasians contributing 47.7 percent of the population, African Americans, 25.7 percent, Latinx, 22.7 percent, Asian, 2.3, two or more races, 1.7 percent, and American Indians, 0.1 percent. Each of these communities bring something special that help in synergizing our strength leading to a more rapid socioeconomic development.

This is only one aspect of our diversity. The city is equally diverse in terms of gender, religion, socioeconomic status, age, nationalities, skills and a lot more. Our city has produced some of the most talented sportsmen, artists and more in the entire country. And most important, this diversity continues to increase rapidly. There is so much we can do together. We have a responsibility of making anyone calling Fort Myers home to feel welcome and enjoy what we offer. Loving one another brings out the best of each other. Its opposite (hating one another) is actually bowing down to the worst of human souls and we should never bring ourselves to that. We must together build a "**house of diversity**". Loving our neighbors is part of the great commission. As Nelson Mandela reminded us "*No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.*"

Beginning in 2001, the political body of Fort Myers established a policy and vision of expanding our rich art and cultural heritage by planning the core of our city to highlight art, food, cultural diversity, and more. This helps in embracing one another and appreciating the fact that our strength lies in our differences. Through this, we appreciate the fact that there is greater strength in unity when we appreciate the differences in our diversity. There is a lot more that we need to do together.

It is for this reason that we all need to work together in figuring out how we can be more inclusive of everyone in our city. Throughout my time as the Mayor of this great city, I have been trying to identify ways in which we can improve our inclusiveness. While I was trying to figure out how to do this, I was invited to talk to students in Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui's Intro to Diversity class of Florida Gulf Coast University. A question on whether I had advisors on diversity triggered this committee. The goal of the committee is to explore answers to questions such as, what could the city of Fort Myers do to improve its inclusiveness? What are we doing well and what areas do we need to improve on? and What do we do to make everyone feel appreciated in the city?

You will note in this publication the array of highly talented individuals of diverse backgrounds who are singly and collectively passionate of the task they have been charged with. They have agreed to come together and will give of their time and talents to assist in making our city more inclusive. My most difficult task in this process was in compiling this amazing team and I am extremely proud of the end-product. It is with a great deal of appreciation, humility, and thanksgiving that I embark on this important initiative for my office with the collective expertise, and insight of this esteemed group of leaders and citizens of Fort Myers and the region. The information gathered and shared in this experience will contribute to a better understanding of how we might support our city in leading in positive ways, inspiring opportunity for all citizens of Fort Myers and beyond in the pursuit of the highest possible quality of life for everyone.

Again, I will always be greatly indebted to Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui, professor of Diversity in FGCU College of Education, his students and to the University, for planting the seed of this endeavor when they invited me to address their students over the years, and for inspiring me to make this important step of having a team to help me identify what we need to do to become more cohesive. It is a legacy I look forward to leaving for our city and its people when I am gone.

Randall P. Henderson, Jr.
Mayor, City of Fort Myers

Mayor Randall P. “Randy” Henderson, Jr.



Randall Henderson, Jr., is Mayor of Fort Myers, Florida. He was re-elected to a third four-year term in the primary race in October 2017. He has been a resident of Fort Myers for 40 years, having moved here from North Carolina upon college graduation to begin a professional career in banking. He earned his bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1979 from Mars Hill College. He has been CEO of Corbin Henderson Company, a real estate development and brokerage company, since 1986.

Prior to being elected Mayor in 2009, Mayor Henderson served on the City Council for nine years serving Ward 5 residents.

He is an active community volunteer, currently serving on numerous boards and committees. Mayor Henderson is a private pilot, enjoys flying both for business and personal pleasure, and is an avid fisherman. He has been happily married to his wife Ginny for 40 years and has three adult children: sons, Marcus and Alex, and daughter, Laura Fraser and son-in-law, Jay Fraser with two granddaughters, Virginia Ann Fraser, and newest addition, Ellery Andrews Fraser. He enjoys spending time with his family.

Mayor Henderson is a dedicated public servant with a passion for helping his community and its residents.

Mayor Randall P. Henderson, Jr.
City of Fort Myers

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Committee Chairperson

President, African Network of SWFL

Assistant Professor, College of Education, FGCU

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Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui - Chairperson



Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui was born and brought up in Nyeri, Kenya. For the first eight years of his life Kenya was under colonial rule. During that period the local people including Peter's parents were fighting for their freedom. This was a period of immense inequalities. Peter and his siblings had to walk for more than seven miles to school without shoes. Peter therefore experienced firsthand the evils and injustices of colonialism and the struggle for survival during a war period. In spite of the injustices, his mother always reminded him and his siblings that evil had no color, gender or religion. This probably triggered-off his love for diversity and inclusion.

Peter had most of his education up to a Master's degree in Geography and Education in Kenya. He initially attended school in the beautiful Nyeri county located on the slopes of Mt. Kenya. He later joined the University of Nairobi to study Education and Economic Geography courses. Upon graduation in 1979, he taught in various schools in Kenya. As a teacher he won several teaching awards including the Lighthouse Award two years in a row. At one time, his International Baccalaureate Geography class attained the highest scores in the world. He was then appointed to represent Africa and the Middle East in the IB Committee. This enabled him to travel to many parts of the world and get into contact with diverse cultures.

In 1997, he was hired by Atlanta International School as an expatriate teacher. He stayed there for five years before moving in 2002 to the warmer Fort Myers where he has lived ever since. He was initially hired as the first Black teacher in Canterbury School. While he was teaching school, he was able to pursue further studies including a Master's in Education Leadership degree, an Education Specialist degree and ultimately a doctoral degree in Education Leadership. Peter is an Assistant Professor in FGCU College of Education. He teaches Child and Youth Studies, Intro to Diversity and Environmental Sustainability courses.

Peter has always been very active in the community. For five years, he was the chair of Lee County Chapter of NAACPACT-SO program. He is the current President of African Network of SW Florida and a member of the Lee County Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee. Peter has received numerous diversity and inclusion awards. In June 2019, he received the Florida **Champion of Freedom Award** given by the United For Human Rights Organization for his work in fighting abuse of Human Rights. This is the top human rights award in the state.

Peter, his wife Priscilla (a Nurse Practitioner with Lee Physician Group) and his entire family live in Fort Myers, Florida.

Beth Countryman



Beth Countryman is the Vice President of Treasury Management at Sanibel Captiva Community Bank where she is responsible for supporting business clients using the bank's suite of digital products and services. Beth has more than 25 years of banking experience, including previous roles as vice president/deposit products manager, vice president/sales and service coach, and assistant vice president/customer relationship manager.

A Fort Myers native, Beth graduated from North Fort Myers High School and attended Florida SouthWestern State College (formerly Edison College). Active in the Southwest Florida community, she is a Greater Fort Myers Chamber member, was a school volunteer for more than 10 years and was named a 2010 Gulfshore Business Under 40 Award recipient.

Beth has been married to her high school sweet-heart for more than 25 years and they have one daughter who currently attends FGCU. She was in Dr. Ndiang'ui's diversity and inclusion class that triggered-off the setting up of the Mayor's DIAC.

When not busy at work Beth enjoys camping with friends and family taking care of their three dogs and working in her yard. Beth is passionate about improving the lives of our community's children as well as those around the world. She and her family recently adopted a village in Rwanda, Africa.

Kathy Dupuy-Bruno



Kathy KB Dupuy-Bruno graduated from the Washington College of Law, American University in Washington DC in 1998 with her Juris Doctorate. She received her license to practice law from the state of Maryland in 1999, District of Columbia in 2001 and Florida in 2003.

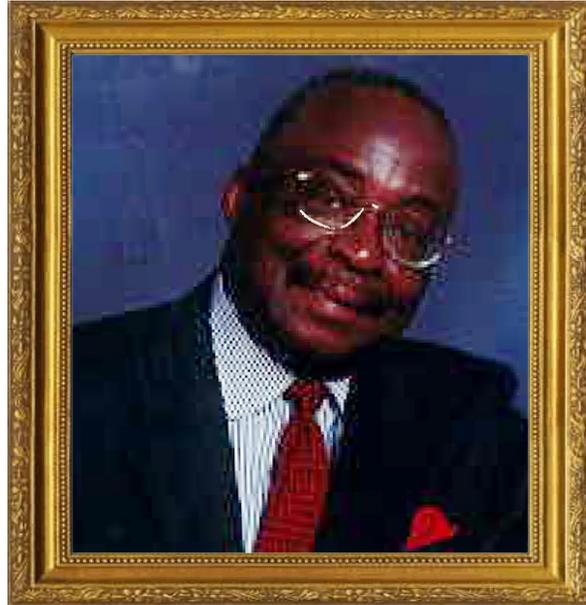
Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno is a member of the Lee County Bar Association and was the first chair of its Family Law Section. She sat on the Board of the Lee County Legal Aid Society, was an organizing Board Member of the Collaborative Professionals of SW Florida, and is a member of Isaac Anderson, Jr. Bar Association. She currently co-chairs the Guardian ad Litem Committee for Family Court in Lee County.

Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno is very active in the community. She is a member of the African Network of SW FL and the Junior League of Fort Myers. She sits on the governing board of the SW Florida Community Foundation. In addition, Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno is the President of the Fort Myers Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno has been recognized for her legal advocacy on numerous occasions. In 2016, Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno was the recipient of the 20th Judicial Circuit's Advocacy Award from the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program. She has also received numerous awards from the community for her public service.

Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno has a passion for diversity. She believes in the American dream and its promises. She has been raised in both of her cultural heritages, African-American and Haitian. She is also fortunate to be married to Reginald Bruno who adds a tapestry of cultures to their family from his African-American, Puerto Rican and Italian heritage. Their pride and joy are Stephanie and Sophia. Mrs. Dupuy-Bruno thanks her biggest cheerleaders, her mom and dad, Alex and Marie.

Roy Kennix



Roy Kennix is a seasoned professional in the field of public administration and has dedicated his career to development of and involvement in numerous community initiatives over the past 30 years. He currently serves as the Vice President for Planning and Development at Basic Learning Skills Inc., a highly specialized tutoring and educational enrichment program for at-risk students.

Previously, Mr. Kennix was the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of Lee County Employment and Economic Development Corporation (LEEDCO) in Fort Myers, FL, through which he was instrumental in raising \$6 million in debt and equity funds from public and private sources for construction of a neighborhood shopping center.

Prior to LEEDCO, Mr. Kennix held positions with the Lee County Small Business Development Center, the Lee County Department of Equal Opportunity, the North City Congress Center on Housing and the Physical Environment in Philadelphia, the City of Philadelphia and the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Most recently, Mr. Kennix has consulted with South Florida Water Management to design operating procedures and draft regulations for its use in transitioning from a race and ethnic based minority business program to a disadvantaged (DBE) business enterprise program based on economic criteria.

Mr. Kennix earned an MPA from the University of Pittsburg Graduate School Of Public International Affairs and is the school's first African American graduate. He also holds a BA in Political Science from Southern University and has completed all requirements from the University of Georgia for the DPA but dissertation.

Sunny Lubner



Sunny Lubner was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. She graduated from Trinity College of London and taught “elocution and drama” while also acting in classic repertory. She and her husband, Clive immigrated to the USA in 1978 with their two children, Claudia and Daniel, and became proud US citizens in 1992.

Sunny has been a passionate board member of Florida Rep for almost two decades, and a lifetime supporter of the arts. In her 40 years in Lee County, she has served on numerous boards and committees, and is resolved to improving the lives of others. She is honored to have been invited to serve on the Mayor’s committee.

The Lubner family business is Clive Daniel Home, purveyors of fine furniture and design, in Naples and Boca Raton. The culture of the firm is one of giving back to the communities they serve, with a focus on women and children.

Michele Hylton-Terry



Michele Hylton-Terry direct the City’s Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), staff, programs, activities and initiatives designed to enhance business and economic development in the City of Fort Myers redevelopment areas. In that role she serves as the administrator for the seven-member Board of Commissioners which oversee the renewal and redevelopment of 12 redevelopment areas in the City of Fort Myers. She has served the local community for several years and was recognized in 2018 by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., “Achievement Week 2018” with the Citizen of the Year Award, she became an honored recipient of the local Fort Myers-Lee County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Service Award. She has received the 2017 Keeper of the Dream Award for meritorious service in the southwest Florida community by the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Xi Omicron Lambda Chapter. Hylton-Terry is also the first Vice President of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Fort Myers Alumnae Chapter.

Bev Larson



Bev Larson, CCIM Lahaina Realty
ABR, ASR/CSR, CRS, AHWD, BPOR, TRC, SFR, PSA, CIPS

Bev Larson has been living in the Ft. Myers Beach/South Ft. Myers area since 1976 and has been involved in Real Estate, Building & Development, representing Buyers, Sellers, Investors, Landlord & Tenants in Lee, Collier and the surrounding Counties with over 39 years diversified experience in the Southwest Florida market specializing in Commercial, Investment, Retail, Office/Medical, Industrial, Land, Hospitality & Residential/Multifamily Properties.

Bev started Building & Developing in the area in 1977. She has earned the CCIM Designation – (Certified Commercial Investment Member), ABR – (Buyers Rep) & ASR – (Sellers Rep) & continues to successfully buy & list with no conflict of interest. In addition, she has earned the CIPS (Certified International Property Specialist), AHWD (At Home With Diversity) SFR (Short Sales and n Foreclosure Resource), BPOR (Broker Price Opinion Resource) TRC (Transnational Referral Certification), CRS- (Certified Residential Specialist) and PSA (Pricing Strategy Advisor). She coordinates CCIM courses in our area, organizes Commercial Real Estate classes, seminars, workshops, events & networking including University Alliance with FGCU. Bev enjoys volunteering in multiple local organizations and belongs to & participates in many organizations and is a Designee and or Certified of ABR, ASR, CRS, AHWD, TRC, SFR, BPOR, PSA, CIPS & CCIM. She is also certified in Feng Shui and has obtained the Advanced Business Certification. Bev is a Master-4th Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do and a 1st Degree Black Belt in Hapkido.

In addition to serving as the 2014-2015 VP of Education Co-Chair, 2016 VP of Operations, 2017 VP of Administration & 2018 Executive Board for the Florida CCIM Chapter, Bev's commitment to her industry includes serving in the following roles and associations:

- 2015 & 2018 President – Florida CCIM Chapter Southwest District
- 2012 -2019 Florida Realtors Commercial Alliance Committee Member
- National Association of Realtors (NAR)
- Florida Realtors (FR)
- 2012-2016 Chair & Co-Chair -Commercial Alliance Committee & Member – Royal Palm Coast Board of Realtors, 2017-2019 Committee Member
- Naples Area Board of Realtors (NABOR) 2011, 2014 & 2016 Commercial Committee Chair, 2011-2019 Committee Member
- Commercial Investment Professionals (CIP) – Member
- REIS (Real Estate Investment Society) 2019 Past President, Member Board of Governors
- * 2019 President - The Offices at Coconut Point (2011-2018 Vice Pres.)
- NAWIC – National Association of Women in Construction – 2018/2019 Secretary Chapter
- * 2015-2016 President EAN - European American Network & 2017-2018 Secretary & Board Member,
- * 2016 - 2019 Citizens Advisory Committee - Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- * Horizon Council - Business Issues Task Force Committee
- * 2016 – 2019 NFM (North Fort Myers) Commercial Corridor Revitalization Task Force
- * Lee County Economic Development - Business Issues Task Force)
- * City of Fort Myers Mayor's Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee
- * 2008 - 2019 Gulf Shore Life 5 Star Agent

Diana Giraldo



Diana Giraldo is the current President, and CEO of Streets Alive of SWFL (501c3). Her experience includes community development, project planning and development, public policy and private/public partnerships.

With her role at Streets Alive of SWFL, Diana leads the organization in the implementation of projects fulfilling the organization’s mission statement “Fostering a Livable Community through Activities, Advocacy, Education, and Service”.

Diana is also the business development manager and partner at E3 Building Sciences, and is involved in projects that impact livability and sustainability for sensible real estate development design, performance and best green construction practices; a passion she has been practicing since her college days.

Diana is native of Colombia, South America where she grew up prior to relocating to the United States in 1999. She holds a Bachelors of Science in Architecture and Urban Design and a Master’s of Science in Management and has over 20 years of experience in the public and private sector. She is passionate about community engagement, sensible community development, and takes time to serve the community in different capacities. Diana is a member of the Community Sustainability Advisory Committee at the SWFL Community Foundation, chairwoman for Run to the Arts, operations leader for ArtFest Fort Myers, is a mentor to young professionals, and was part of the News-Press Editorial Board in 2018. Diana was awarded The Sustainability Trailblazer Award by the Urban Land Institute in 2012, and was nominated by the Cape Coral Community Foundation for Board Member of the year award 2018.

Volunteering is Diana’s way of fulfilling a deep desire for community well-being and to pay it forward in the land where all is possible; a way to learn the perspective of others, their story, their passion, and with this in mind a way to connect the dots to make our community the best it could be because “alone we can do so little together we can do so much” – Helen Keller.

Diana has been a Lee County resident since 2006 with her son and partner, and has 2 rescued dogs that are now part of her family pack. As a bicycle crash survivor, her journey for a better community is more intentional than ever, a life changing experience evolving into something greater than words.

Visionary, out of the box thinker, architect of change, mover and shaker, life lover

Dan O'berski



A founding partner in Trinity Commercial Group (TCG), TCG Development, TCG Property Management and Liberating Vision Design (LVD). Recently, Dan with the help of his family, invested in the creation of Liberating Homes and SWFL Impact Partner which are for profit entities seeking to show the market how to sustainably impact our neighborhood for long term revitalization, elevation of equity, and hope creation! In 2017 they stepped out in their first direct effort with a non-profit called For Prophet that is working to help people stabilize their lives with coaching, educating and advocacy that will liberate individuals with supportive housing and job creation.

Dan was born into real estate doing his first deal at 8 with his grandpa and then officially getting his first license in Michigan while finishing his degree in economics at the University of Michigan. In 2007 he joined CB Richard Ellis-Ft Myers Naples and grew a team before he founded TCG in 2011. They have grown to have offices in Estero, Fort Lauderdale and recently renovated space in Ft. Myers. Dan's affiliations have included, ICSC, Executive Council for the Department of Economics and Finance at FGCU, Building Zoning Advisory Council for the City of Ft Myers, Better Together and the Board of Directors – Big Life Ministries the United Way and the building Inventory Association.

Dan's proudest accomplishments have little to do with business and have recently been focused serving within the City of Fort Myers with his wife and 5 awesome kids. Their family is focused on growing in their love for Jesus and learning to love their neighbors. His passion and love for life is contagious and he believes that he was made to inspire, encourage and bring challenge to people, companies and communities so that they can be liberated into all that God has made them to be!

Martin Byrd



Martin Byrd Jr. was born and brought up in the City of Fort Myers. He is a proud Fort Myers High School Graduate. He started his college education at Florida Gulf Coast University and completed at Polk State College in Lakeland, Florida.

Martin has been very active in the community. He currently serves as the President of the Dunbar Festival Committee. He is also the chair of the newly founded Legacy-Makers Foundation, chair of the Lee County NAACP Economic Development Committee and VP of Administration for the 100 Black Men of SWFL.

Martin is currently employed at Cypress Lake High School in the Physical Education Department as a Varsity Football Coach.

Pam La Riviere



Pam La Riviere has been an educator all her life. She was a member of the Lee County School District board until last year. She strongly believes in equity and closing the achievement gap in order to improve the lives of all children. Pam is also a very devoted Christian. One of the highlights of her life was the invitation to the White House in October 2018.

The Reverend CJ McGregor



Minister, All Faiths Unitarian Congregation. Born and raised in the Adirondack Mountains in New York, Rev. CJ arrived in Florida in 2013. He holds degrees in Education from Mater Dei College and Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School and is Adjunct Professor of Ministerial Formation at Meadville Lombard Theological School.

Prior to the ministry, Rev. CJ held leadership roles in non-profit organizations in New York and Massachusetts where he developed diversity and cultural competency programs. He has served congregations in Florida, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He has served as a hospice chaplain and a chaplain in a forensic unit of a Massachusetts state hospital. He's served his denomination as Commissioner of the Commission on Social Witness and has served the Journey Toward Wholeness Committee. Rev. CJ's ministry is one of justice, equity, and compassion.

Imam Mohamed Al-Darsani



Born (1957) and raised in Damascus Syria, Moved to the USA in 1982. Married and has 4 children 2 of whom are serving in the US army.

Studied Civil Engineering at Damascus University, and has a B. S. in Computer Science from Louisiana Tech University. His Islamic Education started at the age of 7 and has been a lifelong endeavor. He was ordained as an Imam in 1978. He served as the Imam and vice president of the Islamic Center of Southwest Florida between 1996 and 2002.

He founded the Islamic Center for PEACE in Fort Myers Florida in 2005 where he serves as Imam and President of the center.

In 2016 he founded The Interfaith Action Group of Southwest Florida, and he was elected as its president in March 2019.

Served on the Executive Committee of North America Imams Federation (NAIF) between 2016 and 2018.

His main focus in the last 2 decades has been in the area of interfaith and building bridges between different faiths communities, In addition to serving the Muslim community, He co-produced and directed Islamic documentary films and TV shows.

Cole Caruso



Cole Caruso founded the Community Resource Network of Florida, Inc. in 2009 when a similar organization had to close its doors. CRN provides services and coordinates supports to Adults and Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Southwest Florida. Rather than see those people go unserved, Cole quickly developed CRN and poured his heart and soul into making it work for those who need it. Under Cole's leadership, the company has continued to grow each year and provides support for more than 500 people with disabilities from Marco Island to Tampa Bay area. Cole built the organization on the belief that every person should have access to individualized services to enhance their quality of life so that they may thrive at home and in the community. Cole wants everyone behind the organization to remain true to their commitment to individualized, compassionate care, which is at the heart of who they are.

Cole is a passionate member of his community, and strives to make his community a place where all people can live together so each person can live their best life in harmony together.

Cole serves on the Board of Directors for Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida, Lee county school board Advisory Committee on Equity and Diversity, Steering committee for Southwest Florida Community Foundations LGBT Fund, and Board Emeriti to StarAbility Foundation. Cole enjoys travel, theater, and spending time on the water.

Cole's main focus has been on improvement of the life of people with disabilities. He has championed this course in many social and political forums. He has until early this year been a member of the Lee County School District Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee

Leonardo García



Founder and President/CEO) of the Hispanic American Business Alliance, LCC (HABA) & Co-Founder of the Multicultural Centre of SW Florida, Inc. and New York Center Language School in Santiago, Dominican Republic. Originally from Santiago, Dominican Republic, Leonardo was very instrumental in creating/facilitating a sister city relationship between Fort Myers and Santiago, DR.

He lived in Boston where he was an adult Education teacher at La Oficina Hispana de la Comunidad and later the Coordinator/Teacher of a Spanish Language Program to medical staff at Brigham and Women's Hospital through World Education, Inc.

In Fort Myers, Leonardo was the Volunteer Program Coordinator at Catholic Hispanic Social Services and the First Executive Director of the SW Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He holds an English Language Teacher Program Certificate from La Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra and two years of college at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

Neftali Feliciano



Neftali Feliciano is a financial representative that engages individuals, families, and business owners in the financial process. He has been working within the financial services and business consultant industry since 2010. He received his B.A in education from Florida International University. He lives in Fort Myers and especially enjoys spending time with his wife Sheila and 3 children as well as participating in his local church. Neftali is proud to be involved with community organizations focused on education, civil involvement, and youth mentoring.

Favorite Quote: “Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.” – Calvin Coolidge

Melissa Biggs



Melissa grew up in SWFL and has witnessed the community grow and change firsthand. In high school, she held leadership positions in JROTC and Student Government, logging hundreds of volunteer hours and taking an active role in the community.

After graduating she attended Dartmouth College, where she studied Studio Art and Human Centered Design, researched Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies abroad in India, and served on numerous boards as an activist for marginalized voices. She now works as an Inclusion & Diversity Specialist at Chico's FAS, continuing her passion for celebrating differences among people and raising awareness on important issues.

Committee Support Team

Erin Harrell



Dr. Harrell is the CEO and founder of JRM Transforming Education company. She has served as a consultant for the committee. She provided invaluable initial assistance particularly in setting up the process of finding out where we are in terms of inclusiveness. She has also facilitated the analysis of survey data to ensure that it is reliable, valid and helpful in arriving at conclusions.

The Committee and the Mayor are very thankful to Dr. Harrell for all the support.

Kim Harris



Kim Harris is Mayor Randall P. Henderson, Jr.'s Legislative Administrator. She has proudly worked for the City of Fort Myers for 30 years. She was born and raised in Fort Myers. She has one daughter, Megan, who attends FGCU.

Gwen Carlisle



Gwen Carlisle is the City Clerk for the City of Fort Myers. She came to work at the City in March 2018, after a long career as a City Clerk on the east coast of Florida. Ms. Carlisle achieved her Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) certification on December 14, 2010. Ms. Carlisle also is a certified Human Resources professional, earning her Professional in Human Resources (PHR) in 2013, and her Society of Human Resources Management – Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) designation in 2015. Ms. Carlisle, in her free time, loves to quilt and write, and enjoys fishing with her husband, Paul, playing with her two dogs, Katie Lee and Skittles, and spending time with family.

Mission

The Committee's primary purpose is to advise the Mayor on issues regarding diversity, equity and inclusivity as it relates to the city, its residences and businesses. The Committee will proactively promote acceptance and tolerance among diverse citizens. The Committee will also recognize and celebrate the multi-cultural make-up of the city of Fort Myers.

Vision

The Mayor recognizes and acknowledges the diverse makeup and citizens of Fort Myers. The Mayor's vision is to leave a legacy where the city is proactive in promoting, educating, endorsing diversity, and building an inclusive community. The goal is to serve as a positive example of multiculturalism and acceptance. He would like the committee to demonstrate the benefits of our rich and diverse ethnicities and cultures where residents feel accepted and safe within the municipality.

The committee will identify ways and means through which we can enhance greater integration of the Fort Myers community through the promotion of authentic acceptance and respect for all segments of our population. The committee will advise the Mayor on the integration, diversity and inclusion plan that outlines specific goals to enhance the multi-cultural experiences of our residents and businesses to include race, religion, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic level, mental and physical differences, age, sexual orientation and any other aspect of diversity and inclusion.

Goals

1. Advise the Mayor on issues of diversity, inclusion and equity
2. Assess the city's status as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion
3. Promote diversity and inclusion throughout the private and public sector
4. Conduct surveys and other means of data collection to determine how the city is doing and make recommendations based on the data collection
5. Form community partnerships to promote/support diversity and inclusion
6. Educate the public on the importance and benefits of diversity and inclusion
7. Celebrate the rich tapestry of multi-culturalism within the city

History

As an outgrowth of Mayor Henderson's guest speaking in Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui diversity class at Florida Gulf Coast University, the concept of the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee was born (hereinafter "DIAC"). Based on the ever growing needs and diversification of the city, Mayor Henderson established a steering committee of five members. In November 2018, the members were introduced to the public during the Mayor's welcome speech at the African Network of SW Florida gala whose theme was "Embracing Our Diversity". The five steering committee members are Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui, Beth Countryman, Kathy Dupuy-Bruno, Esq., Dr. Guido Minaya and Roy Kennix. The Mayor intended for the steering committee to explore possibilities and avenues for creating a diverse team that would advise him on matters relating to diversity, equity and inclusion within the municipality.

The Mayor and the initial steering committee were committed to developing a statement of purpose, mission, vision, goals and operating principals of the DIAC. Although Fort Myers is currently the most diverse city in Lee County there is always room for improvement and DIAC would be empowered to identify strategic pathways for promoting and enhancing acceptance and tolerance in the ever growing diversity of our population.

The steering committee completed its preliminary work in the first week of February 2019. It recommended two pillars that would sum up issues of diversity in the city; community engagement and socioeconomic empowerment. DIAC would hold its first meeting at the end of the same month. Although it is not limited to this, DIAC would embark on identifying ways in which these two pillars can be addressed.

Final Reflection

If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.

John F. Kennedy

Society is unity in diversity.

George Herbert Mead

We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.

Anne Frank

It is never too late to give up your prejudices.

Henry David Thoreau