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NEWS RELEASE

OC Together Initiative Launches

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative Addressing “Where do we go from here?”
Presented by Orange County Human Relations Council

Orange County, CA – January 21, 2021 – Where do we go from here? After writing statements of support and solidarity over the summer, many organizations are ready to take the next steps in creating equitable workplaces. But fear of making mistakes and inexperience have become barriers to action. In 2021, OC Human Relations will begin a new program to support organizations in taking their next steps to address racial equity.

The focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) over the past six months presents an opportunity and a challenge as more entities look to organizational change, accountability and recruiting and retaining diverse employees.

[Orange County Together](#) (OC Together) aims to meet this challenge by mobilizing and empowering local organizations to enhance DEI efforts and supporting them to create and sustain an equitable organizational culture. [OC Together](#) is a project of OC Human Relations, a nonprofit bringing diverse people together to solve critical human relations issues for 30 years. To meeting the call for “what’s next,” beyond the over 60 requests for implicit bias trainings, the Civil Rights History of Orange County and topics connected to racial disparity, the organization launched the initiative to address long-term change needed to create practices to address racial equity in places of business/nonprofits, with their employees and with those they serve.

Alison Edwards, CEO of OC Human Relations notes that “after partnering with schools for 30 years to create campuses where all students can thrive, we are taking those learnings and expertise to support nonprofits, businesses and organizations to do the same. Everyone in Orange County deserves to work in a safe and inclusive workplace, when that happens, together we are creating a more equitable county where the people who grew up here can stay and grow and contribute to our communities.”

Through a monthly peer learning cohort facilitated by seasoned trainers with in-depth DEI experience, representatives from organizations will engage in a community of practice that includes a twelve-session training curriculum and an interactive facilitated dialogue to move policies and practices along the DEI spectrum. OC Together is geared as a learning journey to develop skillsets and utilize tools for human resource leaders, managers, executives, nonprofit leaders, and owners to consider and include diversity at the decision-making level and to embrace inclusion in their place of business. Businesses, nonprofits, institutions of higher education and other organizations are invited to “reStructure” to build a racial equity infrastructure. Applications for consideration to join for nonprofits are due February 15 and businesses/other organizations on March 1.

"I'm excited about the launch of Orange County Together because it will help move organizations from merely talking about workplace DEI to actually doing something about it," said Rhonda M. Bolton, founder of IncludeMe LLC and a DEI expert who served as a strategic advisor to OC Human Relations on the program's design. "Ultimately, we all want Orange County to be its very best as a place to live, work and raise a family, for all people," she added.

About Orange County Human Relations Council (OC Human Relations)

For 30 years [OC Human Relations Council \(OC Human Relations\)](#) has informed and shaped systems towards building a mutual understanding among residents to create safe, inclusive communities free from violence, discrimination, harassment, and intergroup conflict. The mission of OC Human Relations is to foster mutual understanding among residents and eliminate prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination in order to make Orange County a better place for all people to live, work and do business. OC Human Relations brings people together to create safe and inclusive schools and communities, develop diverse leaders, give voice to those who do not have a voice, and mediate conflict. OC Human Relations has established trust with multiple stakeholders and institutions, engaged in long-term partnerships and responded to the needs of the community related to human dynamics, human relations and building community. As such, we have become leaders in convening, facilitating, and training and are increasingly called upon as content leaders. Today, OC Human Relations is the leading Orange County expert in mediating conflict and in delivering diversity and inclusion programs, through four core [programs](#) across the county: BRIDGES Safe and Respectful Schools, Restorative School Program, Community Building, and Dispute Resolution.

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