

St. Louis Chapter Earns Global Recognition for Diversity & Inclusion Bridges Group

The St. Louis Chapter has been recognized globally for its unique and enriching learning opportunities for members, thanks in large part to the dedicated efforts of the Diversity & Inclusion Bridges Group.

Bridges Group Fosters Understanding and Connection

Formed in 2015 by then-Diversity Committee Chair Kristol Simms, the Bridges Group is a diverse group of chapter members who organize engaging activities. These activities range from attending cultural events like concerts, plays, art exhibits, or movies, to book discussions and ethnic culinary experiences. Their core purpose is to create a space for respectful and open communication across racial and cultural backgrounds, fostering friendships and a stronger sense of community.

The Bridges Group played a pivotal role in organizing the award-winning guided tour of the Underground Railroad in Southern Illinois, which earned the prestigious 2021 Global Diversity Award from the Association of Corporate Counsel.

Expanding Learning Opportunities

The Group has also been instrumental in bringing popular programs to members, such as the 2023 "Artful Observation" series. Facilitated by Dr. Cathleen Fleck, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts and Associate Professor of Art History at Saint Louis University, these programs were held at the St. Louis Art Museum. Participants learned valuable techniques to enhance their observational awareness and reduce bias, while engaging in discussions about the rich diversity of world cultures through the lens of art.

"The Bridges Group's dedication to showcasing diverse perspectives and experiences is a powerful reminder of the critical role that in-house counsel can play in advancing inclusion. By engaging with experiences that highlight the richness and breadth of our community, the Bridges Group helps our members build the cultural competency and empathy needed to be effective leaders and advocates for change in our communities and organizations. These experiences cultivate a strong sense of belonging and connection among our members and stand as a testament to the transformative power of embracing and celebrating our differences. Our chapter's strength lies in our ability to learn from and appreciate the diverse tapestry of backgrounds and viewpoints that contribute to the depth and brilliance of our chapter," said David Hartung, Senior Attorney, Vivos Holdings, and 2024 Bridges Group Subcommittee Chairperson.

Sample Events Showcase Group's Impact

The Bridges Group organizes diverse programming throughout the year. Recent events included:

- **May 20, 2024: Author/Book Discussion:** Co-hosted by the St. Louis County Library Foundation, Left Bank Books, and the Very Asian Foundation, this event featured a discussion with author Rachel Khong about her latest novel, "Real Americans."
- **May 16, 2024: Bridges Meet Up: "Women Achieving Their Greatest Potential: How Can St. Louis Lead?":** Held at the International Institute of St. Louis, this event focused on the challenges women face globally and locally and explored how St. Louis can become a leader in creating a more inclusive society that empowers women.

- **December 14, 2023: Docent-led Tour of "The Culture: Hip Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century"**: This exhibit at the St. Louis Art Museum presented a sweeping art history of hip hop culture and its myriad expressions across the globe, showcasing the resounding impact of hip hop on contemporary art and culture.
- **November 8, 2023: Elevating Transgender Voices**: Held at the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center, this event aimed to bring together members to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of the transgender community.
- **October 12, 2023: An Evening with Morgan Talty, Author of "Night of the Living Rez"**: Set in a Native community in Maine, "Night of the Living Rez" is a riveting debut collection about what it means to be Penobscot in the twenty-first century and what it means to live, survive, and persevere after tragedy.
- **August 26-27, 2023: Festival of Nations**: Members and their families enjoyed an afternoon of global music, crafts, food, and experiences at the largest international Festival of Nations. Participants received "passports" to track the events and booths they attended, with prizes awarded to those who visited the most attractions.

Join the Bridges Group and Make a Difference

"It's a privilege to work with such a dedicated group of volunteers who are passionate about finding and sharing unique learning experiences," said Lisa Savoy, Legal Counsel at Experian and the 2023 Chair of the ACC STL Social Justice Coalition. "Since its inception nearly a decade ago, the Bridges Group has continuously evolved to offer even more enriching learning opportunities for our chapter's members."

"Our programming is consistently ranked as a top reason why members join the chapter," Lisa added. "We strive to offer unique experiences that allow members to learn about different cultures, appreciate our shared humanity, and connect with each other on a deeper level."

If you're interested in getting involved with the Bridges Group, please contact Sue Wagner, Chapter Administrator, at accstl@qabs.com.