

Task force to stage civility conference

Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations

RE: One-Day Conference Titled: “Returning Civility to America’s Democracy: The Promotion of Civil Dialogue”

Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations with co-hosts the North Idaho College Vice President of Student Services Office, the Associated Students of North Idaho College (ASNIC) and the NIC Diversity Council announced the upcoming one day conference addressing the issue of civility in America to be held on Thursday, October 13 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the North Idaho College Schuler Performing Arts Center in Boswell Hall.

The conference will feature a number of partisan and non-partisan political leaders including public office holders, interfaith religious leaders and representatives of the media to explore ideas and constructive proposals on how society at the local, state and national level can promote and encourage civil dialogue focused on reasoned arguments and intelligent debate as a counter to incivility characterized by contentious discourse, negative personal attacks, demonizing one’s opposition, heckling or shouting down or threatening behavior designed to stop the other from being heard and abandonment of respectful communication. As we recognize and embrace the First Amendment constitutional guarantees of free speech, freedom of thought and freedom of the press for all persons, we propose that respectful civil discourse is the most positive and effective means to promote these democratic values.

The conference will open with welcomes from NIC President Rick MacLennan and ASNIC President Sean Collins to be immediately followed by keynote speaker Cornell W. Clayton, Director, Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service at Washington State University. He also is a professor of political science, author and well-known lecturer on the topic of civility.

The keynote address is titled “Civility and Democracy in America”.

Professor Clayton will distribute free copies of the book “Civility and Democracy in America: A Reasonable Understanding” edited by Cornell W. Clayton and Richard Elgar.

The day’s program will include 10-minute presentations from Kootenai County Prosecutor Barry McHugh (R); former Coeur d’Alene Mayor Sandi Bloem; Rabbi Tamar Malino of the Spokane Temple Beth Shalom; Coeur d’Alene Tribal Council Chairman Chief Allan; Admir Rasic of the Spokane Islamic Faith; Rev. Happy Watkins of the New Hope Baptist Church in Spokane; Bishop Tyler Morton, president of the Coeur d’Alene Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) Stake; Coeur d’Alene Mayor Steve Widmyer; Rev. Tracy Springberry, minister at North Idaho Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and West Hills Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Portland, Oregon; A. J. Konda, local Democratic Party activist; Tenzin Tsepel, Buddhist from the Sravasti Abbey; Rev. Paul Graves, retired Methodist minister from Sandpoint; Father Roger LaChance, pastor of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Coeur d’Alene; Rev. Craig Sumey, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Coeur d’Alene; and Idaho State Representative Luke Malek (R).

The media panel will consist of Mike Patrick, managing editor of the Coeur d’Alene Press; Maureen Dolan, city editor of the Coeur d’Alene Press; Sholeh Patrick, columnist for the Coeur d’Alene Press; Gary Crooks, editorial editor and columnist for The Spokesman-Review; and Dan Nailen, journalist with the Inlander Magazine. The panel moderator will be Graydon Stanley, NIC Vice President of Student Services. The panel is scheduled for 2:00 pm.

“As a community college, we have an obligation to provide quality, affordable educational opportunities to students of North Idaho. But community is right there in our name----we take the community college mission a step further to allow opportunities for the community to engage in dialogue that makes this a better

place for all of us to live. As an institution that values diversity, encourages civic engagement, and models the respectful exchange of ideas, we are proud to be a partner in a program that promotes the value of civil discourse,” stated Graydon Stanley, NIC Vice President of Student Services.

Christie Wood, president of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations Board stated: “We are pleased and honored to join North Idaho College in presenting this prestigious list of speakers to address such an important issue.”

The sponsors invite representatives of the various educational, faith, business, labor, human rights, political, social and civic communities along with other members of the general public to attend and listen to the presenters. The audience will be invited to submit written questions during the Q and A session. There will be no conference fee and no parking permits will be required for those attending the day’s event.

Prior to the convening of the conference at NIC, the Human Rights Education Institute, 414 W Fort Grounds Drive, will host a one-hour coffee from 7:30 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. at the HREI Center with those in attendance addressing the question: “What Ideas Do You Have to Promote and Advance Civility?”

North Idaho College has provided quality education opportunities to its students since 1933. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations was established in 1981 to promote civil and human rights.

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