

From Non-Discrimination to Inclusion: One League's Journey
League of Women Voters Convention Saturday, May 6, 2017

Presenters: Dr. Alfreda Brown and Iris Meltzer

Dr. Alfreda Brown and Iris Meltzer posed the question, what is non-discrimination? Answering this, Iris commented, "It is policy to not discriminate, but it is not pro-active. It is a passive stance. While a non-discrimination policy is important, more is needed to be inclusive." Realizing this, the Kent League then asked, "What action do we need to move from non-discrimination to inclusivity. How can we be better at what we do?" We are limited in our views because the others are not at the table.

Iris: The Kent League looked closely at county population statistics and discovered that the Kent League members were more white than the population in community and they were more educated than those in community.

Alfreda: Kent realized they needed diversity training and asked the question, "What we do not know about ourselves?" They thought it was important to recognize who the league serves and to hear those voices. A diverse group will help us to think better.

The next step was to decide what is important in the training? They had deep conversations -deep enough to understand where they were. They studied and worked at understanding the terms bias, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. They used a **Values Card Game*** to explore their attitudes.

Then the Kent League followed up with the question, what values matter most to you when you think about how to diversify the League?

These were the values. The first value was RESPECT. Other four values were:

- Opportunity to contribute
- Teamwork
- Making a difference
- Leadership

They then developed a diversity statement which is: Respect and support a diverse Kent League of Women Voters that will be able to meet the League's mission for all persons.

The next step was to develop a diversity plan and they asked for volunteers to help with this. They involved the whole league to develop a plan so the league would have buy in from the start.

As a result of these steps, some of the concrete actions they took were to respond to an invitation by the Black United Students Organization who asked for training on how to register voters and Know Your Rights Training.

They did additional training, programs, and collaborations and used these opportunities to involve diverse organizations and groups, i.e. NAACP, Black United Students, and young people's groups.

Question and Answers

1. Q. Does the diverse outreach...result in new members? A. Yes, some
2. Q. Do you try to reach out to chunk of population that is different politically? A. Yes, we try reach out to all parties
3. Q. Did you hope that members would stay with league with these changes? How did you keep group together? A. Sent out surveys asking for constant feedback.
4. Q. Did everyone buy in? A. We listened to our membership but not all of the members were involved.
5. Q. As league went through this issue, what were the discussions you used? A. Picture of costumes that looked like KKK's but it was really a picture of religious group. It helped us to dig deeper to the assumptions that we make. Question your assumptions.

*VALUES CARD GAME INFORMATION

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