

Aspire Large Group
Oct 24, 2018
Franklin Community High School

Welcome- Eric Vermilion, Aspire Co-Chair

Financial Center First Credit Union- Dusty- Financial Center is here to provide financial literacy to the community. Has launched Greenwood education center with community room space and financial library for adults and kids. If you need a meeting space (holds 20-30 people), you can reserve it for free. 4x national award winner for financial literacy.

Carmen- Sharing about trails plan fundraiser. Have an opportunity for a match from JCCF. Meet the match- you can make a personal donation or a company donation to help us fund an engineer to do a county-wide trail plan. Greenwood and Franklin both have a trail system, but this will help establish new trails enabling connection across the county. Will help us connect with Whiteland, Edinburgh, etc. Go to Johnson County Community Foundation website <https://www.jccf.org/give-one-time> and select Aspire Johnson County and noting Trails) to make a tax deductible donation. Fundraising will continue to build trails. Carmen also created apparel that benefits trails as well. Order through Aspire or Trails Facebook page. If we had 250 people give \$50 and we'd have half of our match.

Introductions- round robin

Lisa announced that there are a few diversity events taking place in Johnson County. There will be a \$25 cultural dinner at Central Nine Nov 7th at 6:30pm. Look at the Leadership Johnson County website to sign up. Also, there is an Our Heritage Revealed event on Sat. November 10th from 2-4:30pm at the White River Branch. Visit pageafterpage.org to register to attend.

Diversity Panel- Lisa Lintner -moderator

Justin Gash, Margarita Hart, Jennifer Peoples, Carol Phipps, Wendy Preilis

Lisa introduced herself. She is the Johnson County Public Library director, has a gay transgender daughter. Came here 3 years ago. Didn't know a lot about Johnson County, so considered hiding that information when she first arrived, but is very open to those that know her.

Justin- MS computer science and doctorate. Associate Professor of Mathematics at Franklin College. Interest in mentoring and Christian apologetics. Resides in Franklin, IN.

Margarita- born in Pennsylvania, raised in Mexico and Puerto Rico, served as a missionary, certified as a Chaplin. Director of Esperanza ministries.

Jennifer- Greenwood resident for 15 years. Has 3 sons, 2 stepsons and has a 10 month granddaughter. Has a strong faith. Has been employed at Caterpillar, but now attends Ivy Tech for business administration.

Carol- retired in 2011 from Eli Lilly. Leadership role at Interchurch food pantry. 100 women who care founding member. Serves on Bridges Alliance steering committee. PFLAG member in Greenwood. Advocate for diversity, LGBT issues.

Wendy- coordinator of adult learning center at JCPL, English and learning classes for immigrants to Johnson County. Born & raised in Franklin. Worked in social services, earned teaching license before ending up at JCPL. Graduate of LJC. Currently a board member of Kic-It.

Tell us what do you want to want us to know?

Justin- there are a variety of disabilities. Most challenges are troubleshooting problems. Most obstacles are ones you don't plan for. Has a physical disability that people can see, was born with it. Don't know any better, so his experience is different than people that have an accident and then are constrained. Can represent some experiences, but far from exhaustive.

Margarita- immigrant and poverty, elderly that are forgotten, has their perspective to share. Live in Marion, but has served in Johnson county for 35 years. Immigrants, Hispanic or Burmese mostly, but help new arrivals from anywhere or people that have been here for a long time. The last 2 years have been the worst. Changing political rhetoric has made things difficult. See the struggle every day- not pretty. Deals with end of life, human trafficking (often under 5 years old).

Jennifer- 2 sides of the coin- been on the side of working, doing well, having a home vs. now separated from her husband, dealing with challenges of day-to-day due to 2 surgeries and being off work which caused long-term disability and challenges of monthly pay. Adjusting to much less pay as well as being by herself. Have mind and belief that she's going to make it. Attending college to go to business side.

Carol- her perspective transgender. Her child transitioned to male at the age of 18. Came out senior year of high school at Center Grove. High school was very supportive. After graduation, before going to IU, transitioned as male. Made life a whole lot better for him. As a parent, it was emotional, seeing younger child being unhappy with his body. Had to face a decision, educated herself to show support. Did a lot of reading and talking to other parents. Got involved with PFLAG in Indianapolis. About the time of Chaz Bono, read his book. Decided that she would support her son no matter what his gender was. Has been beside him and one of his biggest supporters. They deserve all of the same as the rest of us.

Wendy – work with Japanese women whose husbands are here for work. Not allowed to work. Do a lot of focus on language, restaurants, businesses. Have a high-income level. Very different perspective than Margarita. Help them figure out different ways to live, work and play in Johnson County.

Next question- *How is the experience of the folks you serve different than others in Johnson county? Or the same?* Margarita- Most work in restaurants that pay cash, single moms. Are undocumented, so not marketable in a job. Highest wage is \$5 per hour. 2-3 moms that live together with their children. Challenges are when they get sick they can lose their jobs. Transportation is a challenge. In their 3rd-4th year adults, need a lot of hand holding due to their literacy. Don't have time to learn English. Kids are US citizens, but are bullied a lot a school. Last 2 years have seen high incidents of suicidal ideation. Kids are worried that mothers will get deported. Other family members are killed by the cartel. Constant state of fear for children. They love being here. Feel a part of the community and want to be involved. Felt like they were making progress until 2017.

Wendy- ladies group are very nervous about their English abilities, so no one wanted to come be on the panel. Language is their number one difficulty. Trouble understanding the culture. Asked if they tip at the dentist appointment. She is their safe person to ask questions to. Want to learn what they can do to

have an American friend. Have kids in school, husbands that work. Want to do all of the things, but are nervous to go, will they understand what to do?

Tell us what are the key challenges that you face right now?

Carol- key challenge is very protective of her son. Now 25, married in Vermont. Frustrates her when he or other LGBT people aren't treated with respect. At work, he did a diversity workshop and came out to coworkers as transgender. He was put on administrative leave, never to come back. About to start graduate school, so decided not to fight the employer. Issue now, trying to redefine gender and civil rights protection. Johnson County doesn't have civil rights protection. Johnson County not viewed as welcoming place for LGBT, so her son won't return. Her church of 20 years, was ok when he came out as transgender. They voted on whether they would be open and affirming, but was voted down. No longer a member there. Now belong to a church in Indianapolis that is open and affirming. JoCo is not a strong community with regard to LGBT. Will lose family and friends of those young people if they don't make changes.

Jennifer- blessed in the position that she's in right now. Challenge is going back to school. Classmates are 30+ year younger. Teacher is teaching at their pace, not her pace. Challenged with learning the computer. Maintaining good grades. Challenged that she is at the height of her budget, so paying her bills and one son at home (senior at Whiteland high school). Wanted to speak on behalf of others that are challenged with poverty- not having transportation, needing rides to see the doctor, not having enough to eat, being a single parent, children with disabilities. Known as the overtime queen at her job, but still not enough. Some people may have dropped out of school, or not made the best of choices due to low self- esteem. Then you are in a situation of having more challenges in life. Could fall into a situation where you can't make your bills or if you have bad credit, hard to find a decent place to live. It may be your fault or not, but you can't find a place to rent if you don't have a decent credit score.

Justin- his challenges don't stack up to the last 2 speakers. Has challenges that are sporadic, since he was born with his disability. Blessed with people that are educated and support him. Right now, challenges are in check. Can't turn wrists, can't get something out of the oven or carry things. Have had 3 joint replacement surgeries. When he approaches people and says he's not feeling well, he gets the ok, since they can visually see that he has a disability. If you had someone on the panel with severe diabetes, not everyone would know, therefore people aren't as accommodating. Set up a tone about being an inclusive safe environment. Physical disabilities are looked upon with much less stigma than other things.

Tell us about common misconceptions that people have?

Wendy- most people that she provides services for are Japanese Women. Everyone thinks they are shy, but they like to go out and drink at a brewery or winery, have fun, have friendships.

Carol- asked her son, and he said that people have a perception that transgender individuals are different. He loves to work, love to study, watch Netflix, play with dog. Applies to all LGBT, they are like everyone else. She knows so many of his friends, they are just like anyone else.

Jennifer- As an example, carries herself in a certain way, her appearance, very important regardless if she has \$1000 or \$2. Gets looked upon like she doesn't have or is less than. Or she's supposed to look like she's in poverty. She gets judged just about everywhere she goes. If she is need of help, they are

looking at how she looks. She wants to be put together to face the world because eventually she'll be there.

Margarita- poverty isn't laziness. They just don't use all the resources. There is no go reliable health care in Johnson County. Hears conversations that immigrants are taking our jobs. Don't know many people that want to pick tomatoes, clean with acid without protect or work \$5 an hour jobs.

Justin- popular misconception in the public is a wariness to address what appears to be a problem. People think he'll be offended if they mention it. 2 ways to handle it, asks- based on Ephesians 4- is it kind, is it honest and is it constructive. What is the goal? Is saying this going to achieve the goal? For years, communication was based on that the speaker is responsible for the audience take away. What you say may not end up with the audience you think. Change to be a sensitive listener. Think about what viewpoint they are coming from. When we post comments on facebook, you made offend a whole section of the population and now no longer can have a constructive dialog. Don't let dialog die if it first attempt wasn't 100% correct.

Tell us what is the number one thing our county can do, or the people in this room to feel welcoming to others or included.

Wendy- asked the ladies what would you make you feel better. A big map where you can show where you're from. They like to share about where they are from and explain the differences of our cultures. Get a lot support from husbands work, but that creates a social group of all Japanese women. Don't get opportunity to meet other people. Giving that to the rest of us to think about. Public transportation is huge. If you aren't from the US and don't understand the rules, it's scary to drive. It's difficult that there isn't much offering for public transportation.

Carol- make things more accessible. San Francisco is very accommodating, bathrooms for example. If you have 2 single stall bathrooms, make them unisex. Schools are a huge challenge. Youth at that age may realize that they have gender dysphoria. Schools need to wrestle with this. Spoke at a Center Grove board meeting. But didn't attend public meeting with community because fear of hurtful comments. You don't make up that you're transgender. There are unfounded fears. Help dispel fears. Best advocates can be us, to make policy changes, speak up and stop inappropriate jokess or comment that are made.

Jennifer- Johnson County has been good about helping out with poverty. Being understood. Not prejudged, just acceptance.

Margarita- culture education. Commitment to become culturally knowledgeable. Put political rhetoric behind. Expose ourselves to real stories, to real people. One thing to believe headlines vs. looking into the eyes of a person that is fighting for their kids. Education for cultural differences, poverty, aloneness, have campaign to education schools, workplaces to educate.

Justin- reiterate what Carol said. Best advocates are ones that aren't identified as being with the group. His mantra, if you want students to value the music program. The math professor saying that music is worthwild rather than the music professor. It's a meaningful and instrumental role. Kind, constructive, honest. Sometimes a punt is a correct option. Sometimes it's prudent. Let people take a deep breath and come back to the conversation. Reconvene when things can be more constructive. Communication in American politics, is all in and you lose dialogue.

Questions

Bea- most valuable meeting that she has ever been to. More people need to hear this to understand what is going on in the county. Jennifer- as a person of color, would you share about a woman of color in Johnson County?

Jennifer- when she first came here 15 years ago. A little difficult, would get looks. She's outgoing and personable. Found that people turned their head not wanting to speak to her especially in Franklin at her job. Her first day, felt like she didn't belong for a long time. Everybody is somebody and have feelings, wants to be accepted and invited, to be trusted. Not to be second guessed. Worked at Walmart, but when she came into shop, felt like security guards were walking around and watching her. It's better now.

Dr. Spray- invitation to come to Clark Pleasant High school. Could create a regular Aspire panel that could go around to high schools. Have a transgender group that shares, but struggle. 10am for 40 minutes. His students of color hear White-Land High School. Have a large group of Indian families, asked the appropriate name to refer to them. Wants everyone to feel welcome, to feel safe. Gets the group together every month, would like to have more discussions about diversity. Community is so worldly, those families have lived all around the world. Blows his mind. Not just about Johnson County, but getting the worldview.

Everyone learns when a question is asked.

What question are you tired of being asked? Wendy said her group likes answering questions. Justin likes answering questions. Especially kids looking at him. On occasion, kids will ask him why his feet are different. Happy to answer questions as long as it's well intentioned and authentic. Carol- from trans community, it's good to ask what pronoun. Least favorite question- are you male or female. Or tell me about your son's body parts. Don't ask about body parts! Ask about pronouns- he or she or them. That's fine.

Challenge people to work in- what is your preferred pronoun.

Lisa- thanks five brave panelists for being here today.

Eric- thanks for being here. Hopes that someone takes Dr. Spray up on his offer.

Dana – thank you for coming out and talking to us. Needed to have a dialogue, listening. Thanks for being open and answering our questions. Remember no regular large group meeting. Holiday reception at the Garment Factory on November 14th. Next large group meeting will take place in January.

