Kent State University Leads the Way

Empowering Force for Education, Business, and Community Health

Kent State University consists of a variety of people with amazingly different philosophies, ethnicities and cultural identities, sexual and gender expressions, military and socioeconomic statuses and nationalities. “Kent State students, faculty and staff committed to explore its multitude of diversity by building relationships and promoting acceptance — with understanding and mutual respect — through personal actions, classroom activities and campus events,” said Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Almeda Brown. Over the course of the 2019-2021 academic year, more than 1,000 students, faculty and staff from all eight Kent State campuses did just that. They walked in another’s shoes by volunteering with the Outlaw Hunger Banquet. They shared one another’s cultures at events such as Kent State University at Stark’s Classical Indian Dance and R.O.U.S.’s New Modern Family. And, they honored greatness at the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration and the Read-in at Kent State University at Saline to celebrate National Women’s History Month.

By all accounts, 100 Commitments was a success. On April 12, 2011, Kent State students, faculty and staff gathered in the Student Multicultural Center to wrap up the first-ever 100 Commitments initiative, with contests and activities, as well as the presentation of certificates.

Partnering for Success

From its founding more than 100 years ago, Kent State has partnered with other institutions and organizations to bring together diverse talents, experiences and resources and to serve as a key resource for economic empowerment. In support of that core value, Kent State University is a member of the IUCPG and served as lead institution on a recent Request for Proposal process to award the contract for household and on-campus moving services for the council’s 14 members. The IUCPG establishes various price agreements ranging from dormitory to executive housing and diversifies the supplier base of the member institutions.

Kent State worked with ASAP Movers to design their logo and marketing brochure.

Empowering Custodial Caregivers

Kent State is involved in a nearly $25 million, multistate, four-year-long clinical trial study in which several group intervention programs led by peer and professional helpers will be provided to custodial grandmothers and then compared. The study is funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research, a division of the National Institutes of Health, and it is anticipated that more than 500 custodial grandmothers in four sites across the United States will partake.

Kent State University Professor Gregory Smith, Ed.D., and Bert Haylip Jr., Ph.D. (University of North Texas, Denton) are the lead investigators for the study. They are joined by researchers from the California State University and the University of Maryland. Kent State Adjunct Professor Kate Feldman is the project director.

Smith, whose primary research focuses on caregiving within aging families, said, “This study is important because there is growing evidence that custodial grandmothers are at-risk for psychological difficulties due to neglect and abuse by birth parents, challenges to parenting faced by custodial grandmothers, and limited access to needed services.”

The study will examine effects on the psychological well-being of custodial grandmothers and the grandchildren they care for in complete absence of the children’s birth parents. A disproportionate number of custodial grandmothers are from minority groups, and grandmothers from diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds throughout Northeast Ohio will be recruited to test for cultural differences in response to those interventions.

“One of the first challenges for the researchers is identifying the appropriate families,” said Smith. Families will be identified and recruited in fall 2011, and the study is slated to begin in January 2012. Smith urges aging caregivers, customer service professionals and health care providers to contact him if they know of custodial grandmothers who might be suitable subjects for the study. He can be reached at 330-672-9995 or gsmith2@kent.edu.

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Committing to Inclusive Excellence

To meet that charge, the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion commissioned the 100 Commitments program, which took the university’s commitment to an innovative level.

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Of the four contracts awarded, one went to American Shipping and Packaging Inc., doing business as ASAP Movers. ASAP Movers is a former participant in the PMBA — a collaborative partnership among Kent State, Akron Urban League and Akron SCORE to offer a minority business accelerator program to African American- and Hispanic-owned companies with annual revenue up to $25 million that are doing business in Medina, Portage and Summit counties.

State-supported institutions have a state-mandated goal of doing 15 percent of their business with minority business enterprises. Assistant Manager Larry McWilliams, with Kent State’s Procurement Department said, “It’s gratifying to see a business that Kent State has worked with in PMBA bid and win a competitive award at the state level.” Kent State’s Supplier Diversity Program Manager Veronica Cook-Ellis agreed. “Ensuring supplier diversity not only is a good business practice, but also enhances our supply chain and creates a great pool of diverse businesses to choose from.”

It’s a win-win situation for all. ASAP Movers thrives, and the state’s 14 higher education institutions benefit from competitive pricing and purchasing economies.

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