



Herbert Henderson **Office *of* Minority Affairs**

Annual Report 2022

Presented to

The Select Committee on Minority Issues

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Prepared by

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Executive Director

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Mission

The Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs is committed to serving and assisting all underserved citizens across West Virginia and developing innovative ways to address issues affecting minority populations through conversation, education, leadership, and collaboration.

2020

The COVID-19 Pandemic

At the end of 2019, the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA) appeared before this committee to report on a highly productive 2019 and to preview our plans to build on that strong foundation.

As chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission (MLKC, executive director Upson, launched the year 2020 with the annual Martin Luther King Jr. ecumenical service held at Asbury United Methodist Church in Charleston. MLKC and HHOMA followed this interfaith service with a symbolic march to the Capitol, followed by a bell-ringing for freedom. Also in January, the winners of the statewide MLK poster & essay contests for K-12 students in West Virginia were awarded at a banquet held in the great room of the WV Culture Center.

February 2020 was jam-packed with numerous Black History Month initiatives including the very popular Katherine Johnson Middle School program featuring bronze sculptor, Frederick Hightower. Over three hundred middle school students were in attendance at the WV Culture Center Theater for this educational presentation that combined the arts, culture, and history.

During the first quarter of 2020, HHOMA also began issuing payments to grant recipients under the Building Resources In Diverse Geographic Environments (BRIDGE) Grant Program created by Executive Director Upson. Projects included programs to improve:

- Economic Stability
- Healthcare
- Social/Community Services
- Neighborhood Environment
- Community Living
- Education

Finally, with the start of the new year, executive director Upson began her work on the Governor's 2020 Census Commission.

Then, in an instant, everything changed.

At the beginning of March 2020, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic had hit West Virginia and all public events were halted. The rapid rate of infection and alarming death toll required that all agency employees immediately shift to remote-work only. Demonstrating remarkable professional dexterity, HHOMA immediately transitioned into pandemic response mode. The agency took on a prominent leadership position in placing testing, treatment, and other resources in minority communities.

In collaboration with the State's Bureau of Public Health, WV Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), WV Air National Guard (WVANG), and local county health departments, HHOMA led the effort to establish two to five mobile testing sites in minority communities each week beginning in late April 2020 and running until vaccines became widely available.

Free COVID-19 Testing

May 15 and 16, 2020 | 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

To increase COVID-19 testing opportunities for minorities and other vulnerable populations, the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs, WV Department of Health and Human Resources, WV National Guard and community partners are providing FREE, optional testing for residents in medically under-served population areas. The first round of testing will occur on May 15 and 16, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the following locations.

Berkeley County Martinsburg High School 701 South Queen Street Martinsburg, WV	Jefferson County Asbury United Methodist Church 110 West North Street Charles Town, WV
Mercer County Bluefield State College Harris-Jefferson Student Center Lower Parking Lot 219 Rock Street Bluefield, WV	Raleigh County Raleigh County Commission on Aging 1614 South Kanawha Street Beckley, WV

This testing is available to all individuals in the selected counties, including asymptomatic individuals. Proof of insurance is NOT required.

Identification, such as a driver's license or proof of address, will be required to be tested. Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

NOTE: Testing will be conducted on a first-come, first-served basis.

coronavirus.wv.gov | 1-800-887-4304

While working on the minority COVID-19 testing initiative, at the direction of Governor Jim Justice, Executive Director Upson created and appointed the first-ever COVID-19 Advisory Task force on African American Disparities. The twelve-member task force continues to track and address pandemic-related needs in black and Latino communities throughout the state. The initial task force was established as follows;

Community/Grassroots Groups (3)
Faith-based Organizations (3)
Healthcare/Health Systems (3)
State Legislature (3)

Community/Grassroots Groups:

Owens Brown, NAACP
Romelia Hodges, StriveN4
Mike Jones, KISRA

Faith-based Organizations:

Pastor Rahsaan Armand, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Pastor Wesley Dobbs, Morning Star Baptist Church
Reverend James Patterson, Partnership of African American Churches (PAAC)

Healthcare/Health Systems:

Joylynn Fix, WVOIC
Tiffany Samuels, WVU Cancer Center
Keisha Saunders, Family Nurse Practitioner

State Legislature:

Delegate Caleb Hanna
Delegate Sean Hornbuckle
Senator Patricia Puertas-Rucker

HHOMA's Mission Continued

As the new faster-paced operational rhythm became routine, HHOMA resumed its annual calendar of events using a virtual model of delivery to communities throughout the state.



Fulfilling all requirements of House Bill 2721, HHOMA managed twenty-four community based grants totaling \$500,00, delivered to twenty-three nonprofit organizations. BRIDGE grant awardees revised and completed their projects as final disbursements were processed and submitted to the West Virginia Development Office for verification. The grants went to:

- ★ A More Excellent Way Life Center Church, Inc.
- ★ Appalachia Service Project Inc.
- ★ The Arc of the Eastern Panhandle
- ★ Breast & Body Health Inc.
- ★ BridgeValley Community & Technical College Foundation Inc.

- ★ Children's Home Society of West Virginia
- ★ The Domestic Violence Survivor's Support Group, Inc.
- ★ Fun Fitness Foundation
- ★ Greater Recovery and Community Empowerment
- ★ Horizon Goodwill Industries
- ★ Horses With Hearts Inc.
- ★ Innovative Community Solutions
- ★ Jefferson County Parks & Recreation Commission
- ★ Martinsburg High School Baseball Boosters
- ★ Marshall University Research Corporation (Office of Minority Health)
- ★ Morris Enrichment Center
- ★ Shepherd University Center for Appalachian Studies
- ★ Spotted Owl Healthcare Organization, LLC
- ★ Stars That Shine
- ★ Tony M. Music and Arts Foundation
- ★ Voices Against Domestic Violence Inc.
- ★ West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition
- ★ YWCA Sojourner's Shelter

WE'RE NO. 1

Census Bureau reports West Virginia as the top responding state

By Eddie Trizzino | Times West Virginian

Oct 6, 2020

Executive Director Upson's Census work was completed with West Virginia becoming the first state to achieve a 99.9% response rate. As a member of the Census Commission's Minority Populations subcommittee, director Upson leveraged her work of establishing COVID-19 testing sites to provide Census outreach and education at drive-through and walk-up clinics in minority communities.

2021

While continuing to address the public health impact of COVID-19, managing daily operations, and organizing and hosting virtual agency events, at the Governor's request, HHOMA drafted a 55-County Listening Tour plan to obtain statewide input for unmet community needs and requests for the use of the \$1.335 billion allocation to the state of West Virginia in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.



From August 11, 2021 to December 31, 2021, HHOMA conducted sixteen in-person listening tours in the following counties:

Brooke	8/11/21
Hancock	8/12/21
Ohio	8/18/21
Marshall	8/19/21
Wetzel	9/9/21
Monongalia	9/22/21
Marion	9/30/21
Preston	10/6/21
Taylor	10/7/21
Tucker	10/18/21
Barbour	10/20/21
Berkeley	11/2/21
Jefferson	11/14/21
Morgan	11/9/21
Mineral	12/2/21
Hampshire	12/14/21

All public feedback has been recorded by HHOMA and was submitted to the U.S. Treasury in accordance with federal reporting requirements for ARPA funding.

Looking Ahead to 2022

Addiction and Recovery

The devastating increase in substance use disorder and deaths have disproportionately affected minority populations in West Virginia. HHOMA will be collaborating with Dr. Matthew Q. Christiansen, Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy to conduct educational forums in minority communities. Dr. Christiansen is currently compiling the related data to help quantify this critical issue.

HIV and Hepatitis C Elimination Plan - Treat Subcommittee

Executive Director Upson has been tapped to contribute to the new five-year state plan to eliminate HIV and Hepatitis C. She has already begun working to help develop goals and objectives to strengthen services and address health inequities. The West Virginia 2022-2026 HIV and Hepatitis C Elimination Plan will build upon the 2017-2021 Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan created collaboratively with DHHR and the Bureau of Public Health (BPH).

In-Person Juneteenth Celebration

HHOMA's live cultural events returned to the Capitol on June 18, 2022 with West Virginia artists who performed spoken word, instrumentals, and vocal performances. Local food, merchant, and non-profit vendors served the crowd of over five hundred while children enjoyed a variety of bounce houses, slides, and climbing play features. The 2022 event was headlined by national recording artists, Surface, Ruff Endz, and Hi-5.

In-Person Minority Business Expo

Planning has begun for a Fall 2022 in-person Minority Business Expo. An October press release with full details is forthcoming.

Public/Private Partnership

Due to the overwhelming success of the 2019-2021 pilot project entitled BRIDGE, HHOMA has secured an additional \$450,000 through a partnership with UniCare (Anthem) to fund nine (9) nonprofit groups identified by HHOMA in 2022. These groups include:

Jefferson County Parks & Recreation	\$40,000
Let's Play Mobile Recreation - STEAMER Program	
<i>Mobile recreation for children with no access to organized recreation programs</i>	
The Arc of the Eastern Panhandle	\$30,000
Pathways Program Vocational Training for Disabled Adults	
<i>Providing marketable skill-building for transitioning disabled adults</i>	
YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless Women and Families	\$130,000
YWCA Sojourner's Education/Job Readiness Center	
<i>Literacy, computer, and life skills training for homeless women with children</i>	
Stars That Shine	\$50,000
Girls United P.E.R.I.O.D.	
<i>Feminine hygiene products for at-risk teenage girls</i>	
Breast & Body Health Inc.	\$25,000
Project Hope	
<i>Outreach, screening, and prosthetic assistance</i>	
Spotted Owl Healthcare Organization	\$50,000
Healthy Kids, Healthy Adults	
<i>Fitness, Nutrition, and after-school activities to address obesity</i>	
2nd Coming Family Life Church	\$25,000
Community Enrichment Center	
<i>Learning and recreation space with programs and resources located in economically disadvantaged area of Huntington, WV</i>	
Appalachia Service Project	\$50,000
Kanawha County Home Repair Program	
<i>Repairing and improving substandard homes with facade upgrades and security</i>	

Voices Against Domestic Violence

\$50,000

Domestic Violence Safe House Project

Safe space for planning, preparation, and transition for victims of domestic violence

Recommendations

The Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs would like to thank the West Virginia State Senate and House of Delegates members for the strong support received during the 2020 - 2021 cycle. The agency also respectfully submits the following recommendations:

- Pass a law to establish a West Virginia Indian Affairs Commission made up of the appropriate current state leaders and/or administrators that would develop state recognition procedures for Native-American tribes.
- Prioritize broadband to rural communities to increase access to telehealth options for better health outcomes and for online training and educational opportunities to improve economic stability.



**Herbert
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Office of
Minority
Affairs**

Executive Director

Jill Upson



Executive Assistant
(Vacant)

HHOMA Advisory Board

Dr. James Marcus Arnaez – Dunbar



Tracy Evans – Fairmont



Professor Oree Banks – Institute



Tammy Frazie – Charleston



Thaddaus Breckenridge – Huntington



Del. Eric Householder – Martinsburg



Councilwoman Janine Bullock – Beckley



Dr. Aravinda Nanjundappa – Charleston



Dr. Shelvy Campbell-Monroe – Huntington



Marsha Phillips – Kimball



Dr. Jerry Carr – Morgantown



Professor Patricia Wilson – Dunbar



Elizabeth Crawford – Charleston



HHOMA Online Presence:

MinorityAffairs.wv.gov

<https://twitter.com/WVHHOMA>

<https://www.facebook.com/WVHHOMA/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnYhBjCzM8Ko-K4wvRbPn-w/videos>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/100500278@N02/>