

Workshop jump-starts race against racism

Janesville consultants offer diversity training

By Shelly Birkelo

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"Diversity is the one true thing we have in common ... celebrate it every day."

—Anonymous

JANESVILLE

When most people think about diversity, they think about black and white, said Bob Baldwin.

But it's about so much more.

"It can be about race, sexual preference, age, special needs, tall and short, large and thin," said Santo Carfora.

That's why these two Janesville diversity consultants created diversity training workshops for businesses, agencies and schools.

The YWCA of Rock County, whose mission is to eliminate racism and empower people, invited them to present an educational

workshop, "Exploring Intolerance—Combating Discrimination," as part of an upcoming three-day event in May.

"I am really excited about the workshop, which is one component of the whole week-end, Race Against Racism," said Allison Hokinson, community relations director at the YWCA.

"Santo's and Bob's workshop consistently gets great reviews from attendees because they put participants in real-time situations and remind us that we constantly need to be aware of diversity," she added.

"They make it educational and



Baldwin



Carfora

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fun," Hokinson said.

The workshop is a good place to start, said Carfora, a retired Janesville teacher.

It is interactive and multicultural and offers tools to help combat prejudice and discrimination, said Baldwin, diversity specialist for the Janesville School District.

To get started, the men ask workshop participants to define diversity.

"We try to get them to see in a holistic view instead of distinction between black and white because it's far more than that," Baldwin said.

"It's everything that distinguishes one from another," Carfora added.

For example, at the beginning of the workshop, Baldwin, who is black, asks Carfora, who is white, "Did you think about being white this morning?"

Carfora's answer: "Why would I?"

The activity helps people open up and share their stories, they said.

It also makes them identify with who they are, what group they

identify with, what they get from being involved in groups and what they give to those groups, Carfora said.

"A lot of people think they are not prejudice. But we learn prejudice. It's part of the human condition," Carfora said.

Workshop participants are encouraged to look at human relations issues and to observe where they are at, where they are going and how they got there.

"They are not asked or expected to leave with a homogenous perception of diversity," Carfora said.

Instead, respecting the dignity of all is the key premise," he added.

Learning about prejudice is a process that one workshop won't fix, Carfora said.

"It requires lifelong learning. Yet the fact that they came (to the workshop) starts the process of that journey. We can provide a vital starting point that will get people thinking, talking and acting."

This workshop provides an opportunity to take action and to insure privileges you enjoy are available to everyone, Baldwin said.

"That's what we're about," he said, "celebrating differences."

JUST THE FACTS

The YWCA of Rock County has planned these weekend events of education, celebration and determination:

Friday, May 4

What: Educational workshop: Exploring Intolerance—Combating Discrimination presented by diversity consultants Santo Carfora and Bob Baldwin.

When: 8 to 11:30 a.m., What is diversity: Basic understandings, definitions, stereotyping, racial profiling, becoming an ally, white privilege and more.

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., a panel discussion among local experts designed for corporate human resources personnel, law enforcement professionals, child and family advocates, social workers, clergy and business owners.

Where: Lab Safety Supply, 401 S. Wright Road, Janesville.

To register: Call (608) 752-5445. Cost for the general public: \$25 each or \$20 for two or more participants. Nonprofit cost: \$15 each or \$10 each for two or more participants.