

A. Recognitions: Moorhead Human Rights Awards



City Council Communication

December 11, 2023

SUBJECT:

Moorhead Human Rights Awards

RECOMMENDATION:

Moorhead Human Rights Commissioners Jen Troska and Rachel Stone will present Moorhead's 2023 Human Rights Awards. There is no action required.

BACKGROUND/KEY POINTS:

The Moorhead Human Rights Commission is pleased to announce Human Rights Awards to recognize significant contributions to human rights in our community in 2023. Recipients are:

Zak Amin (Non-profit category): Zak is program manager at the Kurdish American Development Organization and a high school teacher at Moorhead Area Public Schools.

Brandon Baity (Non-profit category): Brandon is the interim Executive Director of the Indigenous Association.

Marisa Bengston-Loerzel (Civic/Community category): Marisa is Regional Community Coordinator – West Central Region for The Arc Minnesota.

Em Christie (Non-profit category): Em is an artist and local advocate.

Excerpts from the nominations include:

- Zak Amin “has worked tirelessly to promote Kurdish cultural preservation as well as Kurdish immigrant resettlement in Moorhead during the eight years since his own immigration and through his work with the Kurdish American Development Organization. Zak overcame great adversity in his homeland, serving US interests as a translator. He helped the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County complete an oral history project, collecting personal stories of Kurdish immigrants. Without his contacts, perseverance and professional acumen, the project would not have been a success.”
- Brandon Baity “is a tremendous asset to our community, strong advocate for our youth and students and an amazing leader. He has consistently stepped up to advance collaborative work toward addressing the social determinants of health, equity, and building an inclusive community. Brandon shares his passion for our youth, cultural expression, and systems change in all spaces he engages.”
- Marisa Bengston-Loerzel “is the mother of a wonderful daughter named Addie, and both are incredible advocates for disability rights. The two of them run Addie’s Royal Cupcake Stand that donates a huge of its proceeds to the Sunshine Foundation, an organization that answers the dreams of seriously ill, physically challenged and abused children. Marisa and Addie regularly volunteer to read stories to children in the library about disability. She speaks often on transportation policy, teaches others in the community to be self-advocates and shows people that potential is not limited by things that people cannot physically do.”



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- Em Christie “is an amazing advocate for creating community and inclusive spaces for all. As the FM Rocks organizer, Em creates joy and excitement through bright colors and creativity. Em is passionate about representation and inclusion and dedicated to advocating for change.”

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Not Applicable

Voting Requirements: Not Applicable

Submitted By:

Dan Mahli, City Manager

Lisa Bode, Governmental Affairs Director

Tanya Kunza, Community Development Program Administrator

Attachments: