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### Reorganized Exchange Congress Seeking Board Members

Residents who have a commitment to racial and other forms of diversity, and who understand that diversity requires proactive efforts, are being invited to serve on the Oak Park Exchange Congress board, a 15-member body of citizen volunteers. The call for new board members is part of reorganization currently underway.

"Times have changed and the diversity dialogue has evolved," said longtime community activist John Lukehart, vice president of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, a Chicago area fair housing organization, who is replacing former Village President Jim McClure as Exchange Congress president. "However, the need for the congress, as a voice and a forum for diversity issues locally and nationally, is greater than ever"

The Oak Park Exchange Congress was launched in 1977 in response to inquiries from around the country about the Village's success with racial diversity. Organized as an annual national conference to explore programs related to various aspects of community life, the Congress was created to support stable racial diversity and economic development. The conference alternately took place in Oak Park and in other diverse community around the country. Over the years, more than 150 communities have participated. The last national conference was in 1994, but regional conferences have been held, including a Chicago regional conference held in Oak Park in September 2000.

"The Congress is concerned about maintaining some continuity in leadership, while also involving new people," said Sherlynn Reid, former director of the Village's Community Relations Division, who will serve as Exchange Congress vice president. "This is essential if we are to progress and establish diversity as a value and more typical community circumstance."

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Joining Lukehart and Reid will be Aggie Stempniak, executive director of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center as secretary and Rogene Hill, current Community Services Department director, as treasurer. Other directors include Bobbie Raymond Larson, an original board member of the exchange congress; Village Clerk Sandra Sokol; Gloria Smith; Barry Greenwald; and Rev. Randolph Thompson. Village President Joanne Trapani serves as an ex-officio board member. Vernetta Schultz, former Village trustee and elementary school board member, John Cain, and Jim McClure are Founding Members.

Oak Park Exchange Congress members will be involved in a conference of diverse communities being organized for the fall of 2002 in the Cleveland area sponsored by the Philadelphia-based Fund for an Open Society, and The Cuyahoga Plan, headquartered in Cleveland.

To volunteer or for more information, call 358.5400 or email [comsvcs@vil.oak-park.il.us](mailto:comsvcs@vil.oak-park.il.us).

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