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# Conference to address workplace diversity

## Guest speakers to cover issues from health care access to faith.

Richard Mullins  
Staff writer

(August 24, 2004) — This September, Rochester will play host to a major corporate conference on workplace diversity, addressing issues from managing different cultures to disparity in access to health care.

Among the speakers at this year's conference are Yolanda King, daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; Dr. David Satcher, former U.S. surgeon general; and Essie Calhoun, chief diversity officer and vice president of Eastman Kodak Co.

"Companies in this region, I would say, are good on this topic, and improving," said Mike Streeter, director of the Greater Rochester Diversity Council, which is organizing the event. "That is always a relative thing, and though there are companies doing good work, this is something you always have to be working on. You are never finished with something like this."

This is the fifth annual conference, and Streeter said the GRDC expects about 600 people to attend the event. Other speakers include Sondra Thiederman, president of Cross-Cultural Communications, and Rain Pryor, an actress, comedian and daughter of comic Richard Pryor.

This year, organizers extended the conference from a day and a half to three

**If you go**

**What:** The Greater Rochester Diversity Council's "Diversity2004 Conference."

**When:** Sept. 13 to 15.

**Where:** Riverside Convention Center.

**Costs:** Range from \$200 for a partial day pass to \$840 for access to all three days for non-members of the GRDC.

**For information:** Call (585) 224-2727, or go to [www.rochesterdiversitycouncil.com](http://www.rochesterdiversitycouncil.com).



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days, accommodating more than 35 speakers and leaders of sessions.

Most of the conference will focus on issues for corporations and how they can improve their diversity practices, Streeter said. Sessions include: hiring people with disabilities, cross-cultural marketing, religion in the workplace and measuring diversity.

This year, the conference will include a special session on the health care system, with the subtitle "If you want high-quality health care, it's good to speak English, be white and rich." That session will explore the causes of disparities in health care because of a patient's race, ethnicity, disability and income.

"You need to have culturally competent people in health care because understanding different cultures is key to providing good health care," Streeter said. "A health issue for a patient in the Hispanic community is not the same as that issue in the Irish community."

The conference comes as two of the three largest local employers — Eastman Kodak Co. and Xerox Corp. — face courtroom battles over their own diversity practices. The companies, both conference sponsors, say they have fair and equitable policies and do not discriminate against workers based on race.

Streeter said he hopes the conference can draw on Rochester's history in the struggle for voting and civil rights.

"When we started this, our goal was to raise the level of awareness in industry about diversity," Streeter said. "As we work on this, we have gotten smarter and better and more educated over time."

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