

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

Rosena J. Willis Memorial Award (Local)

Presented to the NEA local affiliate with the most improved human rights program.



Jefferson County Teachers Association
Members, Kentucky

In 1976, the Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA) merged with the Louisville Teachers Association to represent certified school personnel in all of Jefferson County, Kentucky. This merger was prompted by the court-ordered merging of the city and county school systems in an effort to desegregate Jefferson County schools.

The court-ordered desegregation of the Jefferson County schools began a long and legally contentious fight over forced busing that continues to this day. The county still struggles to desegregate, and everyone, especially the children, feel it.

Today, JCTA has 5,778 members and represents teachers, librarians, speech language pathologists and occupational and physical therapists in 156 buildings. There are 128,672 students enrolled in the Jefferson County public schools, and they are a diverse group in terms of race and ethnicity—more so than the school staff.

Given Jefferson County's emotionally charged background of segregation that continues to impact the community today, the JCTA leadership thought it important that the Association revitalize its Human and Civil Rights Committee. They knew they had a lot of work to do on cultural competency and equity issues.

Under the leadership of Candace Foster, the JCTA Human and Civil Rights Committee commenced its revitalization process by creating an HCR training calendar, and they began with Diversity Training. With help from NEA Human and Civil Rights, they launched an extensive application/interview process, creating a core of nine certified Diversity Trainers. And Diversity training has opened up the Association to new members and new conversations. The JCTA Diversity Trainers have trained all of the JCTA staff, the Board, and the Executive Committee. They have trained entire buildings of people and community members. As a result, JCTA is finally seen as an advocate for social justice and cultural competency in the community.

Moreover, the Human and Civil Rights Committee has done more than Diversity Training. They have revived the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Awards Dinner. This year's ceremony will be held off-site at the Muhammad Ali Center and will award \$1,000 scholarships to two seniors who embody the principles of Dr. King and are seeking a career in teaching or social services.

When Candace Foster took over the Chair of the JCTA Human and Civil Rights Committee, there were four members and no activities. Today there are 14 members and they have at least one activity each month.