

Salem Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission

**Derek Olson**

Occupation: Legislative Chief of Staff

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Date Applied: 8/14/2017 1:00:13 PM

Business Name:

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Supplemental Answers:

**Have you attended a meeting of the Salem Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission? If yes, how many?**

I have not attended a meeting of the Salem Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission, partly because I did not know that it existed. That said, I look forward to attending meetings should I be appointed to serve the Commission.

**Please list the citizen advisory committees, civic, charitable or other organizations upon which you have served including the dates and length of service.**

I do not currently serve on any committees; that said, I look forward to joining the Western Oregon University Alumni Board this coming autumn, and hope to use my experience to serve the Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission as well.

**What do you believe you can contribute to the Salem Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission?**

I believe there are three main things that I can contribute to the Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission. First, I can contribute a commitment to consistent attendance to Commission meetings. I will only serve on one other citizen advisory committee, the WOU Alumni Board, whose meetings do not conflict with those of the Commission. Second, I can contribute a commitment to making Salem an even better place to live. Next month I will officially become a first-time home buyer, and I have chosen Salem to put down roots. I am committed to ensuring that my children have a safe, thriving community to call home. Third, I believe I can contribute a thoughtful approach to service on the Commission. My experiences of living in diverse communities in Italy, the United Kingdom, and South Korea have helped me develop the skills and tools necessary to work collaboratively with people of different cultural, philosophic, and religious affiliations toward a common goal of bettering our shared community.

**Please list those skills, knowledge, or perspectives which you believe will help you better serve and represent the Salem community through your appointment to the Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission.**

One important perspective that I would bring to the Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission is the experience of living abroad, and being a foreigner. During my undergraduate studies at Western Oregon University I studied for a term in Siena, Italy, and following my graduation in 2011 I pursued a Master's degree at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. After receiving my graduate diploma, I left Oregon again, this time for Gyeongsangbuk-do in rural South Korea. These three experiences of living, studying, and working in a different culture, twice with different native languages, helped me to understand other cultures and traditions, as well as added a dimension to my critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills. Having been a foreigner in diverse sociocultural settings, I can see differing viewpoints, where they have common ground, and where potential divisions are. That, along with the experience of growing up in Oregon, will help me to facilitate conversations between individuals that represent a differing cultures and traditions.

**Please list your experience working on diverse teams, public bodies, or committees.**

As I mentioned before, living, studying, and working abroad helped me to develop professional and personal relationships with people from all around the world. In Edinburgh, in particular, I was able to work collaboratively on projects in the international student community. This included volunteer work as an English language tutor, both in conversation groups, and as an editor for homework assignments. In Gyeongsangbuk-do I joined the Talk House Korean-English exchange group along with native English speakers from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand to tutor Koreans, while we studied Hangeul to better adapt to life outside the Seoul metropolitan area. This experience proved invaluable, as I learned as much about Korean social customs and potential social faux pas that many North Americans are unaware of before they happened to me personally. This cultural awareness and proactive mentality continues to be valuable in day to day life in Salem, and will serve me well, should I be appointed to the Commission.

**As a part of its mission the Human Rights and Relations Advisory Commission strives to reach out to the Salem Community. Please describe your affiliations within the community which may aid the Commission in this mission.**

As I mentioned before, I will be joining the WOU Alumni Board this coming fall. While WOU alumni are spread throughout the United States, and internationally, many live in the greater Salem area. My service to the Alumni Board will help me develop connections with members of our community working in nearly every sector. In addition, I am a public employee working with the Oregon State Legislature, through which I have

developed professional relationships with individuals representing various advocacy organizations, many with offices here in Salem.