

# THE EQUITY SCENE ‘ZINE

## Rock County’s Circular on County Equity Efforts

### *MEET THE NEW EQUITY & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIST*

Vanessa Beckham, who started at the end of April, comes to us from Beloit College and Florida Southern College. Since 2012 she has worked for the Beloit College Upward Bound program where she consistently helped high school students from Beloit and South Beloit achieve their educational goals by attending college. Additionally, she has had the opportunity to serve as an Equity Advisor to the HR department and participated in Sustained Dialogue – a group of faculty, staff, and students who discuss our society as it relates to identity and privilege. At Florida Southern College in Lakeland, FL she served as Director of the multicultural student center, and the Principal Designated School Official.

In these roles, she facilitated EDI trainings, created cultural programming, advised all identity-based student organizations, and worked with the international students in maintaining VISA status while adjusting to life in the States. After almost two months in this position, she says, “I am thrilled to be part of the Rock County community. Together, I feel we can take Equity efforts that have already been established here and create an environment of belonging and understanding for not just the Rock County Employees, but all the residents who contribute to this unique county.”

### *INCLUDING “BELONGING”*

Rock County has created an opportunity to foster the development of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) work through trainings, conversations, and employee growth. The goal of all EDI work is to create an understanding of identities different from our own in hopes that we are able to have better communication and overall understanding of the people around us. While inclusion can be viewed as the state of being valued, respected, and supported, with the right conditions in place to achieve your full potential, adding ‘Belonging’ to our EDI goals allows us to feel accepted and valued in the equity, diversity, and inclusion goals we have all worked so hard to achieve over these last few years.

Brene Brown, an American professor, social worker and author who spent two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy, wrote, “people should feel a strong sense of belonging in an organization and share the culture through representation, co-creation, influence, and that inextricable, unnamable, spiritual connection that is shared humanity” (Lee 2022).

Adding Belonging is the necessary next step to further our EDI efforts. We will continue to have the EDI yearly requirements for training, but the addition of B (Belonging) brings the opportunity to celebrate employees in a new way and participate in community cultural events for partial EDIB yearly requirements.

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