



DeSoto has much to offer its residents: beautiful homes, rolling hills and good people, it is a virtual paradise. But like most other cities in America, DeSoto is at risk. What is this trouble in paradise? It is the cultural and racial divide that separates Americans.

Many feel this divide is the single most pressing matter plaguing our communities. Some have chosen not to deal with the problem by relocating to a city less diverse. But this is, at best, a temporary fix. For it is estimated that by the year 2050 there will no longer be a minority population, and diversity will be the rule in most cities. Racial issues are not easy to discuss. But it is a conversation we must engage in if our cities are to be all they can be.

DeSoto now has a vehicle to make this conversation possible. It is called DeSoto Dining & Dialogue. The program, originally organized by Mayor Michael Hurtt, is now run by a volunteer group of DeSoto citizens as an independent non-profit organization. The group seeks to bring DeSoto citizens from different cultural backgrounds together over dinner, for the purpose of encouraging cross-cultural communication.

Dinner tables involving 8 to 10 people are held three times a year. They start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 9:30 p.m., in homes, churches, and restaurants all over the city on the same night. Registered participants are assigned a dinner location.

Anyone who lives or works in DeSoto can participate in the program by agreeing to be a guest at the next dinner scheduled for January 15, 2007. Guests need only bring an open mind and a willingness to share ideas and experiences. To balance the tables and enhance the experience, we need male and female guest of all ethnicities and ages. High school students can receive community service hours for participating.

Trained facilitators will provide structure to the evening and use techniques designed to minimize debate and maximize sharing and understanding. We also need hosts who will agree to welcome a group of 8 to 10 into your home or other location and cover the cost of the meal.

By participating in DeSoto Dining and Dialogue, we are starting the conversation that transforms DeSoto into the consummate American city;

- *A city where diversity is not only in the workplace, but a place where diversity works*
- *A city where cultural differences are not only tolerated but respected*
- *A city where the flag is not just waved but its principles are lived out*
- *A place where family values are not only preached but where every family is valued*

DeSoto Dining and Dialogue was the cornerstone program that qualified the City of DeSoto for the All-America City Award. If you would like to be a part of this award-winning program, please call Kathy Maples Jones at 972 230-9648 or go to the DeSoto Dining and Dialogue website at [desotodininganddialogue.org](http://desotodininganddialogue.org) and register to attend the next dinner. Together with DeSoto Dining & Dialogue we are making DeSoto a one of a kind city where the American dream is a reality.

