

Hyperlocal: Schools, Neighborhoods, Places of Worship

Community Gardening: Immigrants, College Students, and Receiving Community

Members - In Wilmer, Minnesota, the Hmong and receiving community recognized the universal language of gardening side-by-side. They began by attending a learning circle event at Augsburg College's Center for Democracy and Citizenship, which brings together immigrants, college students and other community members to work on issues of mutual interest. Together, this group decided to embrace gardening as a method for building community across languages and cultures. The Hmong, particularly isolated elders, became involved in a community gardening project where they grew vegetables. A landlord donated land for the garden and receiving community members provided tools, and seed and helped work the land. The landlord also converted an apartment into a community space where people could share meals. It became the site of potlucks, featuring Asian and Swedish dishes. For more about Augsburg College's model visit www.augsburg.edu/democracy

Local possibility: Partner with Farmer Frog, which has community gardens at various locations including MAPS (Muslim Association of Puget Sound) in Redmond. www.farmerfrog.org

Neighborhood Welcome Wagon - Minneapolis' *Hello Neighbor* initiative has been running for several years, connecting the city's long-term residents with new residents. Each new family is greeted at their home and given a welcome bag filled with a Minneapolis water bottle, a pie, coupons to local businesses, pre-paid calling cards, and information about city services and resources (in different languages). Bilingual volunteers are recruited.

Faith-Based Communities - ONWARD

Across the country, including here in East King County, places of worship are hosting interfaith dinners and community gatherings. A new resource has emerged for those wanting to include meaningful dialogue as part of these events. ONWARD is a story and data project to help faith-based leaders engage their communities around the most pressing issues today. "ONWARD's goal is to encourage productive dialogue – in places of worship and book clubs, at the kitchen table or in the blogosphere – about what we can do to make sure that everyone is treated with respect and compassion, wherever they are from. Drawing on stories about real people (as well as an occasional animated short or a feature film), we hope these resources can help shine light on what, together, we can do to make sure our systems are consistent with our democratic values and our quest for a shared and prosperous future." <http://onward.sojo.net/AboutPage.html>

Open Door Policy - Nashville's First Church of the Nazarene hosts different congregations for local ethnic groups. "A lot of churches have disconnected alternative congregations using their facilities, but our church isn't like that. These are fully integrated communities within the church. We have two Sunday morning services that are for the more typical, historic (largely white) congregation, then we also have the Haitian service, which is in Creole. Then we have the African service, which is in Swahili. And those four church services are all on Sunday mornings at the same times — and we also have a fully integrated children's ministry." (All the toddlers of the various nationalities play together in the same nursery at the same time. The youth groups are integrated as well.) "We didn't set out to do all that we do. Rather, it's been brought to us by the reality of our city. And we recognized that, to truly be a community church in the area that we're in, we had to open our doors to all people."

Community Based Organizations – The YMCA is creating New American Welcome Centers across the U.S. Earlier this year, initiatives were piloted in Northshore and Seatac, and now the Bellevue Family YMCA is currently planning its New American Welcome Center. The Welcome Centers are all unique, responding to the needs of the local communities they serve. Diverse planning teams reach out to various ethnic populations and provide input on the kind of recreational, social, and cultural programs newcomers would most like to see at their local YMCA.

Schools - Fort Morgan, Colorado experienced significant increase in ethnic diversity in the student population. By the end of the 2010-11 school year, the district had 62 students who spoke Somali. The district started a "**newcomers center**" with accelerated English courses and remediation for "over-age and under-credited" middle and high school students. Morgan County schools also sought to strike a balance accommodating midday prayer. Greg Wagers, Superintendent of Schools, gathered information on how many students would like prayer time, what the impact might be for the classroom, what the existing laws were and how prayers were already incorporated into some events. He faced these charged issues with a fact-based approach, and a school prayer resolution was eventually introduced and endorsed by the school board.

Schools – American Culture Night sponsored by the Hollifield Station Elementary PTA in Ellicott City, Maryland. The PTA president, Linda Dombrowski, surveyed teachers about how to make immigrant families feel more at home. The top recommendations were to improve the parent-teacher conference process and give parents with limited English a better understanding of their children's curriculum, performance measurement criteria, classroom activities, and customs in general. Dombrowski added another item: Make immigrant parents feel comfortable enough to share their talents and time with the school. She teamed up with bicultural and bilingual staff to personally invite families via phone calls during the summer. Interpreters were also used. They urged attendees to share a dish and offered on-site child care. The night's activities included a mock parent-teacher conference guided by certified interpreters who'd received specialized training.