2017 IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS

Denver Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs
Agency for Human Rights & Community Partnerships
IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION is created through real connections between people

2017 marks the third year of the Denver Immigrant Integration Mini-Grant program. This project began with the simple intention of putting some monetary motivation in the hands of our community members with the confidence that Denver’s residents were already caring, welcoming and creative and could craft their own innovative ways to create bridges between people. And they rose to the occasion, time after time, year after year. We are proud to offer twenty small grants to community groups that are raising each other up, creating space to share, learn and create real connections.

Thank you Denver!

"Breaking down barriers and systemic thinking/living/being is hard. It feels like clawing this thick, hard, rock wall. A wall with layers of dirt and ivy and moss because of age. Clawing so hard that your fingers are bloody and bruised.

And often times when you do feel like you’ve made some progress, the next time, you do the same exact thing, and it blows up in your face.

But sometimes (as in the case of Sunday), something opens up. Potential for true, authentic break downs. Conversations take place. Stories are shared. You’ve released some sort of energy out into the world that feels revolutionary in times like these...even though it just looks like a hug or an exchange of phone numbers, or a sharing of recipes.

It’s messy. It’s hard. It doesn’t look good on grant report. But we took a step in the right direction." - 2016 DIIMG recipient

CONTINUING PROJECTS: funded in previous years and demonstrating success

**African Community Center**

ACC Youth Programs is expanding their program from last year in collaboration with the Orbis Institute. The new program will be called the Young Leaders Forum (YLF), whose mission is to intentionally foster critical conversations and civic engagement with peers and adults in their communities. Starting in June, YLF will meet twice a week, once for workshops and once for enrichment activities. YLF participants will work toward an event where they demonstrate what they’ve learned and address a community need.

**Asbury Elementary Inclusion Committee**

Asbury Elementary Inclusion Committee hopes to host Family Sports Night events for grades 2-3 and 4-5 in May. These off-site events feature indoor soccer, tacos, a pot-luck dinner, face painting, and board games. The committee also plans to continue hosting monthly Equity Committee Conversations. The inclusion committee also hopes to create translated workbooks/worksheets for non-English speaking parents, a support group for undocumented students, a homework club for students needing additional assistance, and monthly park playdates.

**Athmar Park Neighborhood Association**

Athmar Park Neighborhood Association plans to continue its Movies in the Park event in 2017. The event aims to connect the community with local businesses and services through a family movie, food, information booths, and other fun activities!

**Clayton United RNO**

The Clayton United Neighborhood Association plans to host a Clayton neighborhood block party called Good Neighbor Celebración on Sunday, August 6, 2017 during Denver Days at City of Nairobi Park. There will be a pig roast, children’s art projects and games, at least two musical bands, and a panel on neighborhood relations with new and long-time residents.

**Spring Café**

The Spring Café looks forward to hosting their second women-only Unveiled event which brings together women from different faiths to discuss the Hijab in their cultures and personal histories. The evening brings women together over a shared meal to discuss culture and religion, and learn about each other in a safe space with facilitated conversations, food, and dancing.
**NEW PROJECTS**

**African Community Center**
ACC plans to develop a project called Teahouse as part of the We Made This program. The goal of Teahouse is to address the lack of programming available to women who have no access to childcare but who would like to spend time in the community enhancing their language skills and building relationships with others. The Teahouse curriculum will entail stress management components, coping skills development, confidence-building activities, communication skills development, and basic financial literacy through the mechanism of ESL lessons and therapeutic art.

**Burma Leadership Council**
The Burma Leadership Council (BLC) plans to hold their second annual Burma Peace Feast in Spring 2017. The event will give the BLC a chance to speak out about the need for awareness around alcohol abuse in the community while also creating an opportunity to promote community unity. Additionally, BLC will invite partners from the local recovery community, Denver Police Department, and other stakeholders to attend the event. All participants will listen to a panel of speakers discuss alcohol abuse awareness, and then enjoy a traditional, Burmese meal.

**Cherry Creek Townhouse Corporation**
The corporation plans to host monthly conversation circles in a Denver townhome neighborhood with a large immigrant community. They plan to offer food, ESL materials, creative supplies, and a safe space for people to express themselves. They also hope to pair neighborhood volunteers with English learners to meet weekly to better foster a sense of community. Finally, they plan to organize a youth event and a summer social event for the families in the program.

**Denver Housing Authority**
DHA will host an exhibit called “Highlighting Denver’s Diverse Population: A Photovoice Exhibit of Denver Housing Authority’s Immigrant Population.” The exhibit will combine photography, dialogue, and social action to reduce cultural barriers and address and highlight community issues and educational opportunities for residents at the DHA. Using photography and storytelling, each property will highlight two immigrants to tell their stories in their native language about what makes DHA home.

**Focus Point Family Resource Center**
Focus Points will host an event called Community through Food and Storytelling to celebrate Latino and Syrian culture. Comal, a social enterprise that trains cooks to professionally prepare and sell their food to the community, will have their Syrian and Latino cooks prepare heritage foods to share. Middle Eastern and Latino crafters will sell their wares, and musicians and dancers representing the two cultures will perform. Prior to the event, Comal members will prepare personal narratives about their life experiences as refugees and immigrants and how these experiences are woven into their cooking.

**Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver**
Habitat Metro Denver plans to connect Latino families in Globeville, Elyria, Swansea with the resources they need to affordably repair their homes. Focus will be on Spanish language outreach and community engagement activities. A Spanish-speaking young adult will be hired and trained as a community intern to help support the project.

**Heritage Cup**
The International Heritage Cup Denver is a mini World Cup style soccer event that was organized in 2011 to promote outreach and unity in the local Denver Metro immigrant and refugee community through the game of soccer. The event is open to immigrant and non-immigrant teams. All participants are encouraged to represent the countries of their origins.
INSPIRE hosts an annual event called Dreamer Day in which local, undocumented high school seniors gather at a local university to learn about financial aid from universities, empowerment sessions, and legal information from local attorneys. The goal of Dreamer Day is to encourage students to pursue higher education regardless of citizenship.

Lutheran Family Services
The International Outdoor Program at Lutheran Family Services organizes activities for refugee youth and their American peers that provide opportunities for outdoor exploration to those who might not otherwise have access. Activities include, but are not limited to, hiking and rock climbing. The program’s vision is that all students, regardless of socio-economic states, immigration status, or language background, should have equal access to Colorado’s great outdoors.

Mexican Cultural Center
Diá del Niño has been a celebration in Denver since 1994. This year, the Mexican Cultural Center is partnering with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science to host an event on April 30th. The event includes free general admission to the museum, music and dance performances, face painting, crafts, Alliance Française, storytelling, and other family-friendly activities.

Farabi Persian Ensemble
The Farabi Persian Ensemble will host a Fall Persian Music and Dance Festival. The ensemble will play music, and seasoned dancers will have performances. The audience will also be taught folkloric Persian line and solo dances that will engage them in the dancing.

Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning
The Spring Institute will host a Veteran’s Day Celebration of Military Interpreters event to connect military interpreters from Iraq and Afghanistan to other veterans of the wars in their countries and to appreciate their service. There will be short presentations from interpreters on their decision to help the American military, consequences of their decision, and how they adjusted to a new life in the U.S. The event will also feature an American military member who has worked with interpreters overseas. Finally, a Spring Institute representative will speak about special immigrant visas and the process for military interpreters to flee their country for the U.S.

ToGathering will be hosting two different events this year. The first is a Latin-American Comedy Night, similar to their Arabic Comedy Night they did last year. The event will include discussion and interaction surrounding comedy clips from Latin-American media. The event will also include food and socialization. The second event ToGathering will host is a West African Get Down featuring dance and music. Professional dance instructors will demonstrate recent dance crazes in West Africa, and a local DJ will provide music from the region. Food and drinks will also be offered at this event.

Towards Justice
Towards Justice is a nonprofit focused on empowering America’s chronically marginalized workforce to address systemic injustice, defend family financial stability and ensure that work is the most effective strategy for economic success. With the mini-grant funding, Towards Justice intends to train immigrants and non-immigrants who live in Denver as Know Your Rights presenters who will explain wage theft, how to identify it, and what rights workers have under Colorado and Federal laws.

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