



# Welcoming Week Report

## A Recap of Welcoming Week 2023 Celebrations

October 2023



# LANGUAGE ACCESS

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# About Welcoming Week

This marks the City of Portland's third consecutive year of active participation in the annual [Welcoming Week](#) celebration. This inspiring movement is spearheaded by the nonprofit organization Welcoming America, and its primary mission is to champion the creation of inclusive, secure, and fair communities that warmly embrace immigrants and refugees.

At its core, Welcoming Week encourages not just cities, towns, counties, and nations, but also the institutions within them, to fully embrace and celebrate what defines their communities as welcoming and inclusive. By doing so, we showcase how this sense of welcoming profoundly contributes to nurturing a sense of belonging for all individuals, with a particular focus on immigrants.



*Welcoming Week's mission is to champion the creation of inclusive, secure, and fair communities that warmly embrace immigrants and refugees.*

Through our participation in Welcoming Week, we effectively contribute to the global outreach of this movement. We highlight the universal values of welcoming communities and individuals, fostering a sense of belonging.

Immigrants and refugees are important contributors to our city's economy, culture, and community. However, they continue to face barriers and inequitable access to our city's services. The Immigrant & Refugee Program works to strengthen our partnerships with these communities because we believe all Portlanders should have a seat at the table and have equal access to our City's services.

The program collaborates with communities, elected officials, and bureaus to advocate for city, state, and federal policies and resources that advance immigrant and refugee rights and support immigrant integration. Program staff works with city council, city bureaus, and community partners to build effective programs, policies, and services for Portland's immigrant and refugee communities. The Program's advisory body – The New Portlanders Policy Commission – works with the City to make sure its policies and programming are inclusive and reflect the needs of Portland's immigrant and refugee communities.

# 2023 Schedule of Events

## Opening Ceremony

The week commenced with a two-day opening celebration held at Ventura Park on September 8 and 9 (Friday 5-8 p.m., Saturday 4-7 p.m.). This event was thoughtfully curated to offer a family-friendly atmosphere with engaging activities, captivating musical performances, mesmerizing dance showcases and meaningful community engagement opportunities. It was an embodiment of the City's commitment to fostering meaningful connections with the community.

In order to ensure engagement, on the opening ceremony event we had a dedicated greeter warmly welcoming the community. This personal touch aimed to create an inviting atmosphere where everyone felt valued and included. As a testament to the event's success, we counted a total of 1,040 people in attendance during the opening ceremony. This impressive turnout underscored the City's dedication to making events accessible and engaging for all members of the community.

The Immigrant & Refugee team's efforts in extending the opening ceremony and programming over two days, coupled with the warm reception, resulted in a memorable and inclusive experience for all attendees.

## Family Fun-day in the Park

The third event in our Welcoming Week lineup was the much-anticipated "Family Fun-day in the Park." This delightful event took place on Sunday, September 10, from 4-7 p.m. at Ventura Park.

"Family Fun-day in the Park" was designed with families and children in mind, offering a ton of fun activities to create lasting memories. Kids and parents alike had the opportunity to enjoy a bounce house, face painting, and balloon art.

In our programming this year, a central focus was ensuring that children were actively included and encouraged to celebrate Welcoming Week alongside their peers. We recognized the importance of providing them with opportunities to make friends, establish connections, and gain insights into the city



*Thirty-one nonprofits and community organizations showcased their services to 1,040 people during the Welcoming Week Opening Ceremony.*

they call home. This event served as an occasion to bring families, neighbors, and communities together on a Sunday evening, fostering a sense of togetherness and unity.

"Family Fun-day in the Park" also presented an invaluable opportunity for the Immigrant & Refugee team to showcase the array of City services available to the community. By engaging in meaningful conversations with attending families, we sought to better understand their needs and aspirations, and to connect them with the vital resources that our city offers.

This event exemplified our commitment to building bridges and facilitating connections within our diverse and vibrant community during Welcoming Week. At the heart of our "Family Fun-day in the Park" event was the objective to ensure that kids and families were well-informed about Welcoming Week and the diverse programming it had to offer. To achieve this, the Immigrant & Refugee team proactively distributed flyers to elementary and middle school students in the community. These informative flyers served as a vital communication tool, extending Welcoming Week's reach to young Portlanders and their families. By strategically sharing these flyers with students, we aimed to not only raise awareness about Welcoming Week but also to encourage families to participate in the festivities. This approach ensured that the event resonated with the younger generation and that they, too, could engage with the vibrant spirit of Welcoming Week.



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## **Uprooted: An Art Exhibition Inspired by Refugee Identity and Resilience**

Our fourth event during Welcoming Week was the captivating "Immigrant and Refugee Art Exhibit" titled "Uprooted: An Art Exhibition Inspired by Refugee Identity and Resilience." This remarkable showcase of artistic talent took place on Monday, September 11, from 5-8 p.m. at The Portland Building.

"Uprooted" was a compelling art collection that drew inspiration from the intricate narratives of refugee identity and resilience. Presented in collaboration between Lutheran Community Services Northwest and Civic Life, this exhibition featured the works of artists who were all refugees themselves, having resettled in the Pacific Northwest. Each piece of art served as a profound visual representation of their personal stories, dreams, and unique life experiences.



*Uprooted was an art show presented in collaboration between Lutheran Community Services and Civic Life. The art collection drew inspiration from the intricate narratives of refugee identity and resilience.*

This thought-provoking exhibition was a testament to the power of art to convey emotions, journeys, and aspirations that transcend language barriers. Guests had the opportunity to explore these remarkable artworks while enjoying drinks and appetizers, creating a vibrant atmosphere for dialogue and appreciation.

The "Immigrant and Refugee Art Exhibit" welcomed individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life to come together and celebrate the rich tapestry of refugee stories, resilience, and the universal language of art. It served as a reminder of the strength and creativity that emerges from adversity and the shared humanity that unites us all.

## Info Session: Oregon Laws and Resources for Hate Crimes and Incidents

Our fifth event during Welcoming Week was an informative and crucial event called "Info Session: Oregon Laws and Resources for Hate Crimes and Incidents." In collaboration with the Civil Rights Unit at the Oregon Department of Justice, this session was designed to shed light on the latest laws and resources available to address hate and bias in Oregon.

This event resonated deeply with the core theme of Welcoming Week, which is all about building inclusive, safe, and equitable communities. By focusing on the legal aspects and resources related to hate crimes and incidents, we aimed to underline our commitment to ensuring that everyone in our community feels safe, valued, and protected.

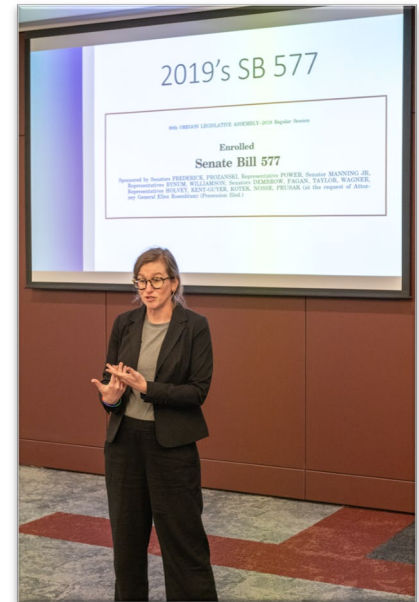
The session focused on informing immigrant and refugee communities about their rights under Oregon's Hate Crimes and Incidents laws, how to report hate incidents to the DOJ hotline, and services to support individuals and communities after a hate incident. Callers are connected with trauma-informed advocates who are trained in crisis intervention and can provide bias response advocacy, including assistance in reporting a bias crime to law enforcement.

By addressing these critical issues during Welcoming Week, we reaffirmed our dedication to building a community where all residents can thrive and live without fear of discrimination or bias. This event served as a testament to our commitment to the Welcoming Week principles and our determination to create a better future for all Portlanders.

## The Immigrant Story

Our sixth event during Welcoming Week was an inspiring and moving gathering titled "The Immigrant Story." This special occasion took place on Wednesday, September 13, from 4-6 p.m., in the City Hall Atrium.

"Stories hold immense power, shining a light on the human experience and kindling empathy and understanding among us all." With this belief at its core, The Immigrant Story Live proudly presented an unforgettable evening celebrating our welcoming and inclusive community. This event was a heartfelt tribute to the remarkable narratives of immigrants and refugees who have become an integral part of our city's rich tapestry.



*The Oregon Department of Justice presented on laws and resources that address hate and bias in Oregon.*

The event unfolded as an engaging and captivating storytelling session, where attendees had the privilege of hearing firsthand accounts from these extraordinary individuals. Each narrative illuminated the unique journey of an immigrant or refugee who had faced challenges and triumphs, navigating a path from their homelands to create new and fulfilling lives right here in Portland.

Liani Reeves captivated listeners with her story of being adopted from South Korea into a white American family. "I remember my family, from a very early age, explaining how my brother came by stork and I came by plane," Liani said. "And they were very transparent and clear with me that the reason I was there was because there was a family that decided that they could not take care of me. That orphan identity is something that is so ingrained in who I am."

**Each narrative presented in the "Immigrant Story" illuminated the unique journey of an immigrant or refugee who had faced challenges and triumphs, navigating a path from their homelands to create new and fulfilling lives right here in Portland.**



Liani also said that her sense of identity and security has been deeply shaken by a climate of increasing hate crimes against Asian American and anti-immigration politics.

These compelling stories offered a testament to resilience, determination, and the profound beauty of diversity. The Immigrant Story event was a poignant reminder of the strength that emerges from embracing individuals from all corners of the world, forging connections, and recognizing the shared humanity that binds us together.

In line with the Welcoming Week ethos, this gathering served as a powerful demonstration of our commitment to fostering a community where everyone's story is valued, heard, and celebrated. It was an evening that left a lasting impact, reminding us of the richness and depth that diverse narratives bring to our shared tapestry of life.





## Building Community Through the Arts

Our seventh event during Welcoming Week was a vibrant and culturally enriching gathering titled "Building Community Through the Arts." This engaging event took place on Thursday, September 14, from 4-6 p.m. at Pioneer Courthouse Square.

The central idea behind this event was to invite our communities to come together and visit downtown Portland. It was an opportunity for friends and neighbors to spend quality time enjoying music and the mesmerizing performances of the Aztec dance group, Mitotiliztli Tezkatlipoka. These captivating artistic expressions served as a bridge between cultures, promoting understanding and appreciation among diverse community members.



*The central idea behind Building Community Through Art was to invite our communities to come together and visit downtown Portland. It was an opportunity for friends and neighbors to spend quality time enjoying music and the mesmerizing performances of the Aztec dance group, Mitotiliztli Tezkatlipoka*

Moreover, "Building Community Through the Arts" aimed to be more than just a cultural showcase. It also provided a platform to connect with other community members and foster meaningful relationships. Attendees had the chance to engage in conversations, share stories, and strengthen the bonds that form the foundation of a thriving and inclusive community.

This event was not only about the arts and culture but also about spreading awareness and sharing valuable information about the resources available in our city. By offering access to essential City resources, we sought to empower our residents and ensure that they were aware of the support systems in place to help them thrive.

In the spirit of Welcoming Week, "Building Community Through the Arts" exemplified our commitment to creating a downtown atmosphere where everyone felt welcome, valued, and engaged. It was an evening filled with culture, connection, and community, underlining the beauty of diversity and the importance of coming together as one Portland community.

## Citizenship Day

Our eighth and final event during Welcoming Week was the highly significant "Citizenship Day." This event took place on Friday, September 15, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Portland Community College - Cascade Campus.

"Citizenship Day" was a day dedicated to supporting individuals seeking to become citizens of the United States. It was a collaborative effort in partnership with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon SOAR Immigration Legal Services, who generously provided FREE legal services to those on their journey to U.S. citizenship.



*"Citizenship Day" was a day dedicated to supporting individuals seeking to become citizens of the United States.*

This event epitomized the core principles of Welcoming Week, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, support, and empowerment. It was a day where our community came together to ensure that those who aspired to become citizens had access to the necessary legal services and guidance.

Portland Community College - Cascade Campus served as the perfect backdrop for this event, highlighting the significance of education and empowerment in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen. The day was dedicated to assisting individuals in navigating the complexities of the citizenship application process, ensuring that they had the resources and support needed to take this important step in their lives.

"Citizenship Day" was a tangible expression of our commitment to welcoming and embracing all members of our community. It represented the culmination of Welcoming Week's themes of inclusion and unity, as we worked collectively to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals seeking to call the United States their home.

## Conclusion

Throughout Welcoming Week, the City of Portland and the Immigrant & Refugee Team demonstrated the incredible power of unity, compassion, and inclusivity. From the spirited opening celebration to the vibrant cultural showcases, each event underscored our unwavering commitment to making Portland a safe and welcoming environment for all. We want to remind you that fostering a sense of belonging requires active participation and inclusivity from all community members. It's about celebrating our diversity, understanding that our strength lies in our differences, and actively contributing to the creation of a welcoming and inclusive society where everyone can truly belong.

As we move forward, let's draw inspiration from Welcoming Week's goals and standards: fostering belonging, inclusion, visibility, and involvement. Each one of us has a role to play in building a city where every resident feels valued and appreciated. By embracing diversity and actively engaging with our neighbors, we can make Portland a shining example of inclusivity and empathy. Together, we can create a community where the bonds of unity are stronger than the forces of division, and where every individual is an integral part of our shared journey towards a brighter and more welcoming future.



**Wafa Almaktari**

Immigrant & Refugee Coordinator

[wafa.almaktari@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:wafa.almaktari@portlandoregon.gov)

**About City of Portland Office of Community & Civic Life**

The Office of Community & Civic Life (or just Civic Life) connects the people of Portland with their City government to promote the common good. Founded in 1974, Civic Life works to build stronger communities by supporting and empowering Portlanders to get involved with their local government through civic engagement, community leadership, and support for neighbors.



<http://portland.gov/civic/immigrants>

[503-823-4519](tel:503-823-4519)

[civiclif@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:civiclif@portlandoregon.gov)