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Diversity & Human Rights *focus*

November 2008

Housing for Refugees in the Salt Lake Valley

by Gerald Brown, Director Utah Refugee Services

Perhaps the biggest problem facing refugees resettled in the Salt Lake Valley is finding and keeping safe affordable housing. Two resettlement agencies, the International Rescue Committee and Catholic Community Services, are challenged with the charge of finding homes for refugees in the Valley.

Increasingly, recently arrived refugees are losing their apartments because they cannot afford to pay the rent or because they do not know how to properly take care of their dwellings. In October 2008 alone, 10 refugee families were evicted because they could not pay their rent.

Organizations who serve the homeless in the Valley report that more and more refugee families are among their caseloads. The Utah Refugee Services Office is attempting to address the problem with a multi-faceted approach. Most important, the Office is working

to secure funding which will support Tenant-Based Rental Assistance for newly arrived refugee families who need it. The goal is for refugees to use no more than 50 percent of their income on rent. Qualifying families currently use up to 90 percent of their income.

Another goal of the Office is to work with community business people and mainstream organizations to build an apartment complex that will provide transitional housing for up to 50 refugee families. As envisioned, the complex would also include a meeting facility that all refugee communities can use to gather.

The case management system, which the Refugee Services Office intends to introduce at the beginning of 2009, will ensure that refugee families are taught to maintain their homes appropriately. This will, in turn, lower the rate of evictions.

Finally, the refugee housing crisis in the Salt Lake Valley will ease as refugee resettlement begins to expand in other parts of the state. Refugees are currently moving on their own to Logan because of the availability of jobs and more

affordable housing. The two resettlement organizations are considering the feasibility of expanding to other parts of the state because of these same two factors.

The Refugee Services Office will work to ensure that towns and cities outside the Valley are prepared to welcome new refugees. Within the next five years, Utah will have more of a statewide refugee program as opposed to a Valley-wide refugee program.

Utah citizens who have questions or ideas pertaining to refugee housing or other refugee issues are invited to contact Gerald Brown, the Director of the Utah Refugee Services Office at geraldbrown@utah.gov, 801-526-9787.



Mark your calendars! Join Salt Lake City in celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights December 8-13.



November is American Indian Heritage Month

by Forrest S. Cuch, Director
Utah Division of Indian Affairs

In the fall of 1998, Goshute Indian students from the Ibapah Middle School sent a letter to then Governor Michael O. Leavitt requesting designation of American Indian Day. Shortly thereafter, Utah tribal leaders endorsed this action by resolution and followed up on this request at their annual meeting with the Governor in January 1999.

Governor Leavitt agreed to the request to proclaim American Indian Day in Utah.

The first ceremonial signing of the Proclamation took place November 12, 1999, at the Utah State Capitol. Prior to this time, President William J. Clinton had approved a proclamation declaring November National American Indian Heritage Month. For the next four years, the state's Division of Indian Affairs requested annual designation of American Indian Day in Utah.

During the 2004 General Session of the Utah State Legislature, Senate Bill 67 (sponsored by state Sen. Beverly Ann Evans) was passed, designating the Monday preceding Thanksgiving as Indigenous People Day in Utah, and November as American Indian Heritage Month. The passing of this bill thereby eliminated the need for annual requests.

Why should American Indians have such a day designated? Well,

there are many reasons. First, the commemoration should simply remind folks there were indigenous people in Utah.

Second, the descendants of these people continue to exist in the form of five nations: Goshute, Navajo (Dine'), Paiute, Shoshone, and Ute. Furthermore, the federal government has continuously recognized and designated November as American Indian heritage month in years past.

November is the time of Thanksgiving, a feasting holiday when we are reminded not only of the pilgrims, but of our American Indian Heritage. This is an excellent time to tune up American History. What really did take place so many years ago in New England?

Well, we do know now that this was not the first time the Indians celebrated a fall harvest. In fact, we now know the Algonquian Indians had been celebrating a fall harvest for hundreds of years prior to that time.

We also know most of the foods prepared and served at the First Thanksgiving, such as venison, fowl, cranberries, squash and inhabited pumpkins, had actually been enjoyed by the Indians

previous to that time. Thanks to the James Loewen book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, we also know that when the pilgrims landed in Plymouth they found a town of about 2,000 people. They did not have to cut down trees in the middle of November and plant seeds, as has been incorrectly told to so many school children.

The pilgrims were dismayed to discover that acre upon acre of corn, beans and squash had already been harvested and stored in the ground in caches. It was through the kindness of Squanto, the only survivor of his tribe, that pilgrims were able to locate food and be saved from starvation.

Not only did Squanto show them where the food was stored, he also showed them how to plant crops the following spring. Consequently, I believe Squanto should be named as a founding father of this nation.

We certainly have much to be grateful for, and we owe some of it to the American Indians.

For More Information about American Indian Heritage Month and events please visit:

Indian.utah.gov



Dialogue on Discrimination

Series 4 & 5

The Salt Lake Human Rights Commission, under the direction of Mayor Ralph Becker and City Council Chair Jill Remington Love, is sponsoring a Dialogue on Discrimination Series.

The purpose of this series is to encourage community involvement and to help inform the development of public policies.

You are invited to attend an upcoming dialogue series. Each meeting will include guest speakers who will talk about discrimination in its many forms. There will then be an open round-table discussion facilitated by local leaders where people can engage in dialogue about discrimination.

This article focuses on two upcoming dialogues topics and speakers. We hope you will be able to join us in this open platform to hear and share personal accounts of discrimination.

For more information about this series and other events through the Office of Diversity & Human Rights, please visit:

www.slccgov.com/mayor/divHR

Series 3

University of Utah Alumni Hall,
School of Medicine

Topic: Racism

Speakers:

Debra Daniels is the Director of the Women’s Resource Center at the university of Utah and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Debra has over 25 years of experience in the field of social work, focusing primarily on sexual assault, domestic violence, diversity and social justice issues. Her willingness to advocate for all people has made her a valued and respected member of the community.

Erika George was a litigation associate in the New York City firm of Coudert Brothers, where she focused on international litigation and employment discrimination. Before teaching law, Professor George worked on women's human rights issues and HIV/AIDS in India. Professor George teaches international human rights and humanitarian law, international law, and civil procedure.

Series 4

Westminster College
Special Events Room

Topic: Faith

Speakers:

Dimple Singh is an International Business and Economics student at Westminster College. She has been an active advocate of diversity via student government for the past four years. Currently, she is working in the Office of the President at Westminster College and pursuing a career in commercial real estate development. Her aspiration is to establish her own company and serve in a government position.

Michael Popich has been teaching at Westminster College for 27 years. Dr. Popich's research and teaching interests have centered around issues in Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, and Comparative Religions. He is a contributing member of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, the International Association of Genocide Scholars and the Southern Poverty Law Center.



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