**Hosting a Welcoming Week event**

Events are the heart and soul of Welcoming Week. They build stronger communities by bringing together new and long-time residents and encourage dialogue and build connections between people who are seemingly different.

**Fill us in on your Welcoming Week event**

To help us promote and support your event, [fill in this Google form](https://forms.gle/oW6WkSsbCbJy2dXz8) with details about your local event. For any questions, contact Laura at laurac@swifoundation.org.

**Developing Your Event**

Welcoming Week hosts build bridges through events that bring people of different backgrounds to work on a shared activity. Use the following steps to help guide the development and execution of your event.

**Listen:** Start by listening. Ask residents: What are the needs you are hearing from your community? What is being identified as a need or a priority? Remember to also ask what types of projects feel relevant. You will also want to listen for where understanding and connection need to be built in your community. Who do you hope to bring together? What type of activity will build connections?

*Example*: If food insecurity or a lack of family-friendly activities is brought to light, consider planting a fall crop in a community garden.

**Identify and engage partners:** Before you go deep into the process, identify partners to help create and host the event. Partners should bring expertise to the event and help recruit diverse attendees. If your event relies on bringing together people from different backgrounds who typically may not interact, you may need to recruit multiple partners who can inform the logistics and also ensure diverse turnout.

*Example*: if you are hosting a community gardening project, ask the Master Gardener program of your county to be a partner. If your event is to register people to vote, partner with the local chapter of the political parties to create a bipartisan voter registration drive.

**Jointly establish clear goals for your event:** Once you’ve brought your partners onboard, define the purpose of your event. If you are working with multiple partners, it’s likely that several goals will be identified. Verbalizing those among the event planners will be critical to ensuring success and sustained collaboration for future efforts.

Below is a useful chart to get started:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expressed community need** | **Welcoming Week event idea** | **Possible partners** | **Goal(s)** |
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**Plan your event:** As you work toward launching your event, use the Welcoming Week planning checklist to make sure you’re ready. Have a clear plan for engaging a diverse range of people to participate in the event. If you are planning an in person event, you will also want to check on local COVID-19 regulations, and may want to have a backup plan in case rules change.

**Plan to continue welcoming after Welcoming Week is over:** Solo events can be impactful, but events that bring people together consistently over longer periods of time are often more effective. Consider whether there are opportunities to bring participants back together in the coming weeks or months, or if there are other ways you and your Welcoming Week partners can continue to collaborate throughout the year.

*Example*: If you’re hosting a virtual Civic Dinner where folks engage virtually over dinner while discussing structured questions, consider whether there are avenues for them to continue to build upon the relationships that began at the dinner. Will you distribute contact information? Are there guidelines for sustained contact? Will you measure continued involvement?

**Event Examples**

**Welcoming Week 2021**

**in southwest Minnesota**

**Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg** hosted an afternoon of fun at Kerkhoven Pillsbury Park. More than 14 local organizations set up in the local park shelter to show what this KMS area community has to offer. There were door prizes, giveaways, games, a few special appearances, and a dance performance by Raíces de mi Tierra, a local Mexican Folk-Dance Group.

Kivu Immigration Law hosted a free film screening of the documentary “Abrazos” Sept. 14 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Memorial Auditorium in **Worthington**. The film, directed by Luis Argueta, features U.S. citizenship children who travel 3,000 miles from Worthington to visit their parents’ homeland of Guatemala. The evening included a moderated panel with community members who appear in the documentary.

In **Montevideo**, community members painted tiles to go into a community art installation. A new catering business in the area served Soul Food at the event, and the remaining food left at the end of the day was donated to the local police department. Children were invited to take a swing at the piñata and were given prizes donated by local community members.

**Need help getting started?**

*Contact Laura at laurac@swifoundation.org.*

BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS

* Clean up a local park or a few neighborhood blocks
* Tend a community garden
* Paint a community mural
* Build a new playground

COLLABORATE WITH BUSINESSES

* Host a cooking demonstration with a local immigrant chef
* Recognize immigrant entrepreneurs through an award ceremony
* Host a networking event for entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds
* Work with a local coffee shop to ask patrons to share a Welcoming Week message as they grab their coffee.
* Host a tour of local immigrant businesses

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

* Host a naturalization ceremony; in the U.S., Citizenship Day is September 17
* Host a naturalization test preparation workshop
* Host a voter registration drive

ARTS & CULTURE

* Host a block party with a local DJ, food trucks and activities for kids and families
* Partner with the library to feature stories about belonging and multilingual books
* Work with a local immigrant or refugee artist on a piece of public art
* Host a Civic Dinner on belonging
* Host a “drive-in” family movie night