



## **Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Community Integration Initiative Aspen to Parachute Region**

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### **SUMMARY OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR 2006**

The Aspen to Parachute region Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative will begin the community integration process by continuing to invite dialog, and gather ideas from the Immigrant /Receiving Community. The Steering Committee will focus its efforts on four outcomes:

- **Building relationships between Immigrant and Receiving community members.**
- **Increase awareness, understanding and appreciation between immigrant and receiving communities regarding each other's language, culture, values, and contributions.**
- **Increase immigrant's access to information and orientation regarding their communities, employment, education, physical health, mental health and U.S. traditions and customs regardless of language preference.**
- **Identify, develop and promote leaders in all cultural communities**

These outcomes stem from months of work in the Aspen to Parachute region. There are activities designated for the SIRFI Steering Committee, and activities that engage the help of six (6) nonprofit organizations who the Decision Making Committee has recommended to receive The Colorado Trust and/or El Pomar funding. The Decision Making Committee decided not to start a new organization or hire permanent integration staff because it was felt that the perception of the community would be that I/R community integration activities would be the sole job of one person/ one organization. The decision to award "mini-grants" was also based on the feeling of the DMC that they would engage lots of people into the process, which would stimulate the community integration process.

**Activities for 2006 will include:**

- The writing of the Aspen to Parachute SIRFI community recommendations – *Initiative Summary and Recommendations for Action*, its translation into Spanish, and its distribution to interested community members is one of the first Decision Making Committee/ Steering Committee tasks of 2006. The community will be encouraged to actively use the recommendations to modify existing services and to create new strategies.
- The current SIRFI Decision Making Committee is in the process of writing a job description for Steering Committee members. This is a working committee whose purpose is to manage all SIRFI activities for the next four years. The DMC will be asking their current members to apply, as well as, recruiting members from the community to serve on the 10-15-member committee.
- The Steering Committee will explore, implement and evaluate strategies regarding ways to communicate with the community, and ways that the community can easily access information about SIRFI activities, and immigrant issues.
- The Steering Committee will brainstorm ideas, have interviews with community members and naturally occurring groups, in order to gather ideas on ways to re-energize and re-engage the Aspen to Parachute community in SIRFI. It will plan, implement and evaluate the success of the activity (ies).
- The Steering Committee will interview I/R community members to gather ideas about forming a facilitated networking/ discussion group that will meet periodically, in locations throughout the region. The suggestion from fifty health & human service agencies, recently queried, was to design an Immigrant Forum loosely based on a previous community group – the Latino Networking Council. The Steering Committee will pursue this and other suggestions, and will plan, implement and evaluate a facilitated group model that will meet at least six times in 2006.
- Community barriers are expected to include the anti-immigrant sentiments that are stirred up by election year anti-and pro-immigrant bills that are being introduced in Colorado and nationally. Therefore a priority would be to learn how to manage our public image and relations. Using The Colorado Trust, SIRFI Technical Assistance funds, the Steering Committee would like to bring in a trainer who could provide educational sessions for the Steering Community and other interested community members.
- The community has requested cultural competency training for health and human services, government employees, employers, and other interested community members. Once an informal needs assessment has been done, technical assistance

options will be discussed with Spring Institute, and the SC will plan the logistics, hold and evaluate the training sessions in its ability to meet community expectations and needs.

- The Steering Committee will promote strategies and will support community efforts to increase the immigrant's access to information to help them better understand their community. These include but are not limited to information kiosks and cultural orientation classes for immigrants.
- The Steering Committee will oversee the implementation, progress and evaluation of the six funded community projects.
  - It will be responsible for reviewing the reports submitted to them from each of the projects.
  - It will be responsible for reviewing the reports to the CO Trust and El Pomar that have been prepared by the fiscal agent.
  - It will evaluate the continued use of The Colorado Trust SIRFI funds for community based projects and will decide if this is the direction that it wants to continue in future years.

These activities will be funded with \$26,200 from the Colorado Trust and \$3,000 from the El Pomar Foundation.

*Staff for SIRFI activities will be hired on an as needed basis (translators, baby sitters, bilingual facilitators, etc) and the management of this staff will be the responsibility of the SIRFI Steering Committee (SC) and the Fiscal Agent.*

The following activities will be managed by non-profits.

- **Congregations and Schools Empowered (CASE):** \$25,000 from the Colorado Trust will fund a community organizing model aimed at bringing people together and empowering them in order to address local problems that are of concern to those involved. The community-organizing model CASE is using places a strong emphasis on identifying and training leaders who then have the opportunity to practice leadership skills in the community.

*This model will bring together members of the I/R community. It is based on the premise that the best way to organize people is to work within trusted institutions in the community that tend to have constituents that are passionate about their belief in helping one another and their community. Anyone who is interested in local issues can be involved; they don't have to be involved in a church or school community. In addition to the proposed CO Trust funding CASE has been also awarded an additional \$30,000 by El Pomar, and has applied for an additional grants.*

- **Colorado West Regional Mental Health Center:** \$10,000, from The Colorado Trust, will fund bilingual mental health staff, and a consultant to work directly with employers who offer Employee Assistance Programs (for mental health) and their immigrant employees to increase employer awareness, understanding, and

appreciation of immigrant employee culture, values, language and contributions. It will increase immigrant employee access to mental health benefit, and it will increase immigrant access to information regarding the community, employment, benefits, traditions and customs of the workplace.

*Colorado West Mental Health Center has been providing mental health and substance abuse services in the region for 35 years. They have worked over the years to improve their cultural competency, but had limited success in providing mental health access for immigrants, even when there is an Employee Assistance Program in place to pay for the visits. They feel that the employee worksite is a logical site to improve integration. Most immigrants come here to work and most businesses in the valley need and hire a significant number of immigrants. The worksite is a naturally occurring environment where integration takes place. A culturally competent business is successful both financially and in its human relations. An immigrant that is culturally competent in the ways of the receiving community will be more productive and successful as an employee and as member of the community.*

- **Colorado Mountain College, Even Start Family Literacy Dual Language Multicultural Preschool.** \$10,000, from The Colorado Trust, will underwrite the 1/3 of the salary of a preschool teacher. The program includes extensive parent education activities, 2<sup>nd</sup> language acquisition for both children and their parents, and will also require parent participation in integration discussions, as well as in activities that are planned

*Although the Aspen to Parachute region had over 40% of its births in 2004 to Hispanic mothers, the community has very limited opportunities for immigrant parents to enroll their children in bilingual preschool. In January 2005, Even Start piloted a preschool in Glenwood Springs for Spanish speaking families. They invited tuition paying students from the Receiving Community (Even Start immigrant parents do not pay a fee) to join the preschool with the intention of building literacy and cross-cultural understanding among Spanish and English speaking families. The CO Trust funding will help expand this preschool model into Rifle community.*

- **Access Roaring Fork** \$10,800 (\$ 7,000 from El Pomar & \$3,800 from The CO Trust) will be applied to the creation, and production of three pilots of a TV Cooking show designed to create interaction, awareness, understanding and appreciation between different cultures. A multicultural, multi language student crew that is supervised by the agency's Executive Director will produce it. Shows will be distributed through public access TV stations, libraries, the Internet and public showings.

*The crew of nine will consist of students who live throughout the region. They will be chosen for their leadership potential and they will be expected to participate in the public showings. The three shows will pair families from different ethnic backgrounds. The wide distribution of the videos showing people of different backgrounds, reflecting their common humanity, and sharing simple pleasures, is a foundational element and one that*

*is necessary to engage the larger community. The greatest benefit in seeing images of neighbors as a tapestry of faces, languages, aromas, and customs is the lowering of self imposed mental barriers which, without challenge, lead to defining Americans as people who are like us. Mainstream media does little to break stereotypes. Community media has the power to help define the communities that they serve.*

- **English in Action** \$10,000, in El Pomar Foundation funding will be used to increase the existing programs capacity to match members of the immigrant community who want to improve their language skills with members of the receiving community who want to help, and build a one to one relationship with someone from the immigrant community.

*Program staff, tutor, and learner work together to create a curriculum that takes into consideration the learner's educational background, English language proficiency, immediate and long-term goals, and learning styles. Classes are held in a time and place convenient for the learner. The English in Action model will also place advanced English learners in the Leadership Corps. LC members volunteer their time working in one of the region's non-profits. LC begins to view themselves not as simply recipients of service, but leaders with something valuable to offer others in the community.*

- **Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club** \$5,000, from the El Pomar Foundation, to expand the enrollment of low income, Spanish speaking immigrant children into ski and snowboard programs. The targeted children will be provided with scholarship aid, free bus transportation and equipment loans. In addition the AVSC will recruit 12 adolescent mentors to assist new families.

*All AVSC participants develop an understanding, awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and the mountains. Instead of focusing on cultural differences, AVSC participants work side-by-side to engage in new experiences that build self-confidence and create camaraderie. AVSC reaches all interested children regardless of their background and brings them outdoors to the mountains in winter to share an activity that defines the region. Few outdoor recreation options exist for children during the wintertime, and unlike popular sports such as soccer that can be played anywhere, skiing and snowboarding can only happen in the mountains. They give children a sense of belonging to the place they live that other sports cannot match. Through AVSC, children become locals. They grow to love these sports and the culture that surrounds them. The immigrant children who have previously enrolled in AVSC program remained for an average of three years.*