

# World Refugee Day

## 5 Simple Ways to Foster Even Greater Welcome for Refugees

### Include refugees and receiving communities in your planning process

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Rather than relying only on service providers to plan the event, **include both refugees and the broader receiving community in event planning and implementation.** These community stakeholders will know firsthand exactly what would make your community feel more welcoming and will be able to engage their friends and neighbors in an event that is meaningful and well attended.

In the Cedar Valley region of Iowa, local refugees and receiving community members worked together to plan several National Welcoming Week events. [Read more](#) about how they creatively used social media and other tactics to engage the broader community.

### Consider your event goals when selecting a venue and advertising the event

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Ask yourself: **“What are our goals, and who can help us reach them?”** Then be sure that the people who can help you reach your goals are invited and feel welcome attending your event. Select an event location that your target audience will find comfortable and appealing. This might include parks, recreation centers, or schools, for instance. When you craft your invitations, be sure to use mediums that appeal to your target audience. For instance, you could get word out about your event through a local faith-based organization or elementary school if your target audience members are likely to be engaged in those organizations.

The organizers of Salt Lake City’s World Refugee Day celebration decided that their main goal was to educate their community about refugees through their World Refugee Day event; however, only a small fraction of the community was attending their annual celebrations. They were wildly successful in achieving their goal once they changed their event location and messaging in order to attract their target audience. To find out how they went about creating a more inclusive celebration, check out Welcoming America’s [Celebrating Refugees: Events and Messages that Move People webinar](#).

## Develop a communications and media strategy

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Having a media strategy will ensure that your World Refugee Day event is well attended and communicates the stories of refugees and the benefits of resettlement to the broader community. **First, decide who you would like to reach and what you would like that audience to believe about refugees in your community.** Use compelling stories that showcase refugee business owners, teachers, and others who continue to make a positive impact to demonstrate the contributions that refugees are making to your community. In addition, be on the lookout for partners who have strong media relationships and can help you publicize your event.

For instance, in Florida, some organizations successfully increased the publicity that their [National Welcoming Week](#) events received by asking their local Department of Human Services office to leverage their strong relationship with the local media. For more messaging tools, including a sample press release, see [Welcoming America's Reframing Refugees: Messaging Toolkit](#). For assistance creating a comprehensive communications campaign strategy, take a look at [The Just Enough Planning Guide: A Roadmap to Help Nonprofits Reach Their Campaign Goals](#).

## Invite local leaders

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**Invite elected officials, local government, business and faith community partners, and other influential community leaders to shine as ambassadors for your work by taking the time to invite them personally to speak or attend your event.** Help to prepare them by providing all of the necessary details about the event and communicating how it will benefit them to attend – for example, by offering an opportunity to engage with new partners and constituents and learn about innovative work happening their community. If you are inviting a local leader to speak at your event, provide them or their staff with fact sheets and talking points so that they can be prepared to highlight the best of your work and why it matters to them. If you are expecting media to attend the event, work with media and communications staff of your guests to ensure that they are also prepared, and that your publicity is also extended.

In Philadelphia, Mayor Michael Nutter attended a block party at the Growing Home Gardens to welcome the newcomers who garden there. [Click here](#) to read more about the event.



For more information on creating compelling messaging for your audience and sample press materials, take a look at [Welcoming America's Reframing Refugees: Messaging Toolkit](#).

## Provide opportunities for attendees to make meaningful connections during and after the event

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**One of the most powerful ways to foster a more welcoming community is to create opportunities for people to meet and connect, and to develop new relationships.**

Incorporating deeper opportunities for engagement – such as volunteer projects that bring together newer refugees and longer term community members; facilitated conversations over food; or small business exchange tours, are just a few of a nearly infinite number of ways to engage people who wouldn't typically interact. Nearly any kind of event can be planned to encourage new relationships. For example, at a park cleanup you can gather everyone, explain directions and send people out in small groups with people they don't know. Let the participants know at the beginning that part of the mission is to meet new people, and encourage mingling. You could also host a table where attendees can do group activities together, or incorporate a way for people to stay connected after an event, perhaps by signing up to work on a community garden, language tutoring, or other another effort of common interest.

One example of a project that brought newcomers and longer term residents together is [I'm Your Neighbor Portland's](#) series of community events. Participants had the chance to interact with residents through community conversations, shared meals, art exhibits, and more. [Click here](#) to learn more.



Nebraska is Home



Growing Home Gardens

### **Learn More**

Need more ideas? Take a look at the exciting projects happening around the country in Welcoming America's [Promising Practice Library](#).

### **Make Your Event Part of Immigrant Heritage Month**

Did you know that June is Immigrant Heritage Month? [Click here](#) to visit the site of our partner Welcome.US and learn how to make your event a recognized part of Immigrant Heritage Month.

### **Do More**

Inspired to do more? Start planning to be a part of [Welcoming America's National Welcoming Week 2014](#).

### **Tell Us about Your Event**

Did you host a World Refugee Day event last year that brought your community together? Tell us about it [here](#).

### **Additional Resources**

[Click here](#) to explore IOM's useful resources and messaging on what migrants contribute to their communities.

[Refugee Council USA's 2014 World Refugee Day Advocacy Toolkit](#) offers excellent guidance on making advocacy a part of your World Refugee Day celebration.

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🏠 *Building a Nation of Neighbors*  
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