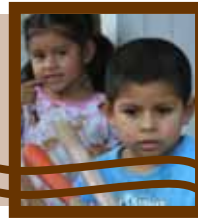


# *Healthy Together:*

## Creating Community with New U.S. Americans



### **Focus Group Summary with new U.S. Americans from SHAPE (South Hennepin Adult Program and Education)**

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 two focus groups were conducted with new U.S. Americans at SHAPE. The volunteer coordinator at SHAPE recruited the 21 participants, who were from a variety of counties, and helped organize the focus groups, which were conducted at SHAPE. The majority of participants were from the city of Bloomington, with participants also from the communities of Edina, Richfield, Eagan, Fridley, and Burnsville. The purpose of conducting the focus groups was to learn more about new U.S. Americans' experiences living in their communities, and to hear suggestions about how to improve community connectedness and health. Funding was provided by a grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation of Minnesota.

Funding support for these focus groups was provided by a "Healthy Together: Creating Community with new U.S. Americans" planning grant awarded to Bloomington Public Health. The overall goal of the grant is to improve health and reduce health inequities for new U.S. Americans by building social connectedness and relationships between newcomers and the broader communities. In this report, the term "new U.S. Americans" and "newcomer" are used interchangeably.

#### **Name one or two good things about your community?**

*The top three things:*

1. Good security in their communities; overall they felt safe within their communities
2. Good quality schools that are located close to their homes with good programs for kids
3. Communities that they lived in were very quiet and clean with nice neighbors

#### **Identify one or two community events/programs you/your family participated in last year?**

- Many people participated in the programs held at the library or spent time at the library
- Many others cited participating in their children's schools events such as school concerts, baseball games, school picnics
- Four individuals mentioned attending Farmers' Markets in Bloomington and Richfield.
- Walking around parks or spending time in parks was mentioned by numerous participants
- National Night Out was mentioned as a great way to meet neighbors

#### **How do you find out about what programs or services are available in your community?**

- Bulletin boards at schools, the grocery store, and the library
- Pamphlets from the school or mailed out from the city
- Bulletins via mail, internet, email, newspaper, and radio
- Word of mouth from teachers, friends

**How can the community help newcomers feel welcome and a part of the community?**

*(Participants responded by indicating if they felt welcome to the community and how they were/weren't made to feel welcome.)*

- SHAPE, school programs, park programs, Open Arms program, low income support programs were all cited as programs that made new U.S. Americans feel welcome to community
- Neighbors, family, and school teachers, places of employment were noted as persons who made new U.S. Americans feel welcome
- Some comments were made about how they did not feel welcome, that people seemed to be “secretive and private” and not friendly.
- General consensus seemed to be, however, that people in Minnesota were more friendly than in other states.

**In what ways do you contribute to your community? (1 group responded to this question)**

- Two participants volunteer at schools
- Recycling trash, picking up trash around apartment building
- Donating Blood
- One participant helps a friend by babysitting
- One participant wanted to volunteer, but felt her English was not good enough

**How easy is it to get to know long-term residents in your community?**

*(One of the groups had difficulty interpreting this question)*

- A few cited it was not easy to get to know long term residents as the long time residents seemed to keep to themselves.
- However when asking for help, long time residents were very helpful
- Two individuals noted National Night Out as a nice/good way to meet the neighbors
- One participant said a person told her at the market to “Speak English” and she felt this was very rude

**What are your ideas on how to increase opportunities for newcomers and long-term residents to get to know each other and learn from each other?**

- Ask long term residents for advice about doctors and other services
- Ask long term residents to attend cultural events to learn about different cultures, share food from different cultures

*(Question not understood by 1 focus group-interpreted it as: What currently exists for newcomers and long term residents to get to know each other?)*

For what currently exists:

- The library, markets, cafes, schools, volunteering opportunities at the school

**What do you do to keep you and your family healthy? (Only asked of 1 focus group)**

- Exercise, walk
- Eat healthy
- Healthy relationships with family

*Participants were also asked “Is it difficult to stay healthy here in the U.S?”*

- Three people responded “Yes”
- Two participants felt because people work so much, it is easier to eat bad, fast food, harder to eat healthy.
- The group also discussed that women have much more power in the U.S. when compared to other countries, where men tend to have more power. The women felt this balance of power creates healthier relationships between men and women

**Drawing Activity: Draw a picture of your ideal community. Two groups were formed in one of the focus groups that had time to do the drawings.**

**Group 1:** Church, Buddhist Temple, garden, pool, Muslim Temple

**Group 2:** Schools, fountains, Sun, playground, library, parks

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