

# A Plan for “Learning About Our New Neighbors”



## 2008 HCE State Conference POOL Program

**Purpose:** Demographic trends indicate a continued increase in racial diversity throughout Wisconsin counties. This program creates an opportunity for participants to learn about the variety of cultures in their community.

**“Seek first to understand, then be understood.”**

**The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**

**Steven Covey**

It is most effective to listen actively and empathetically, consciously trying to understand and to see the world from the other person's perspective. It is also beneficial to listen without judging. Avoid "hearing" through a filter formed by your own worldview, and do not impose your preconceived ideas on what you hear, because doing so will inhibit your efforts to put yourself in the other person's shoes.

**Step 1: Select a way to learn more about racial diversity in your community from the list below, or come up with another idea!**

**Ideas for an hour-long or longer program:**

- Invite a person or a family who lives in your county to talk about coming to your community from another country. Provide the speaker(s) with some questions or topics beforehand to help them focus on what HCE members want to learn. Inquire about their greatest enjoyments and struggles with living in a new community.
- Ask HCE members to bring in something that represents his/her culture (a picture of grandparents, something handed down through generations, a recipe, etc.). Display the pieces around the room. Have members briefly “present” their piece noting how it relates to his/her culture. If the newest cultures are not represented, (i.e. Hispanic, Hmong, etc.) invite someone to attend and share. You might get a new member! This will be a great opportunity for the guests to learn more cultures other than theirs, and to make new friends.
- Ask a local ethnic restaurant owner to share his/her heritage and talk about the restaurant's menu items. Ask for or make copies of the restaurant's menus so participants can follow along and learn more about the authentic foods served there. Perhaps for a donation, food could be brought from the restaurant to the meeting to sample. Or, determine if it is possible to have the event right at the restaurant.
- Ask your county UW-Extension Family Living Educator or CRD Educator to talk about the changing demographics in your community, or for a handout that demonstrates changes and trends. He/she has contact with Dan Veroff, UW Applied Population Lab, for local demographics. Or, visit <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html> to learn more about your county.
- As a community outreach project, invite someone who directs language tutoring in your community to describe what he/she does and how others can get involved.

- Organize a guided tour through one or two different ethnic grocery stores. Purchase ingredients and use them to make refreshments for your next meeting.
- Contact your local librarian to ask if she/he would host a short film on a country which represents a new culture in your community. (Example: “Crossing Arizona”)
- Share upcoming community cultural events with members through your HCE newsletter. Have members report back after attending the event.
- Visit your community gardens to learn about foods grown by the Hmong and other cultures. Ask the garden director to give you a guided tour. Sample a vegetable unique to the culture. Provide a recipe to HCE members to try the new foods.
- If there are local cultural centers, (i.e. a Multicultural Center) approach the director for possible program ideas which can be held there or at your regular meeting place.
- Get involved in a Diversity Circle if your community offers them. These are guided discussions with racially diverse people residing in your county.

**Ideas for a 20 minute program:**

- Use the “Learning More About Our New Neighbors” discussion guide to discuss what changes HCE members see in the community.
- Invite a neighbor from another culture to your individual club meeting and have a mini cultural food buffet luncheon sharing recipes and stories unique to all cultures represented in your club.

**Step 3: Determine ways to share what was learned from any of the ideas you have chosen for a program.**

**Ideas:**

- Place pictures of your event(s) along with brief articles on new things learned in your HCE newsletter.
- Invite the local media to cover your event(s).
- Take a few minutes of each monthly meeting to talk about cultural events members attended and people they met.

**Step 4: Determine possible community outreach projects.**

Your HCE Community Outreach Vice-President might want to investigate the needs of new families in your county. For example, the language barrier is obstacle frequently faced by families coming from other countries. Determine if schools need student tutors, and if adults in ESL classes would like a personal coach to help them learn English. Perhaps there are other ways HCE members can reach out. Share updates at your meetings and in your newsletters.

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## “Learning About Our New Neighbors” Discussion Guide

**Note:** The program leader will need to find the answers to #1 before the discussion begins.

**1. Use this website to get information about your county:**

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>

Number of residents in this county \_\_\_\_\_

- White residents make up \_\_\_\_\_%
- Black residents make up \_\_\_\_\_%
- Hmong residents make up \_\_\_\_\_%
- Hispanic residents make up \_\_\_\_\_%
- Other races (specify) \_\_\_\_\_%

Are you surprised about any of the statistics above? What surprised you?

**2. Below are some examples of where you might be observing increased racial diversity in the county. Talk about the diversity you are seeing.**

Food  
 Clothing  
 Churches  
 Celebrations and Cultural Events  
 Worksites  
 Languages  
 Newspaper  
 Other

**3. Share something that defines your culture. (Examples: country from which relatives immigrated and stories about that process, foods made, holidays celebrated, languages spoken, religious beliefs, values, etc.).**

**4. If you could learn more about another culture ...**

- What culture would that be? Why?
- What would you like to learn?
- How could you find this out?

**5. What cultural activities are hosted in the county? Could the group could attend the event(s) together?**