



Welcome to the latest North West Migrants Forum newsletter. As usual it has been a hectic few months! Here is some of what you will find in this edition...

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Our Chief Executive and Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Lillian Seeno Barr, with NWMF volunteers and members launching our new Intercultural Community Café in Brooke Park.

NWMF LAUNCHES ITS INTERCULTURAL CAFÉ!

THE North West Migrants Forum is to open a new ‘Intercultural Café’ in Derry after being awarded £175,102 through the PEACEPLUS programme.

Set to be developed on the second floor of the Embassy Building at 3 Strand Road – below our current offices – the café will create a space where the city and district’s growing multi-culturalism can be celebrated and community integration enhanced.

The ambitious project is being supported by PEACEPLUS which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). It is being funded through Derry City and Strabane District Council’s PEACEPLUS Local Co-Designed Action Plan.

Our Chief Executive, Lillian Seeno Barr, said her vision was for a safe and welcoming venue where international protection applicants, those granted sanctuary, migrants, international students and those from a black and minority ethnic background can meet and engage with the wider community on a casual but enlightening basis.

Mrs Barr said, “We are very excited to be announcing our Intercultural Café and we are indebted to PEACEPLUS for looking favourably on our funding application.

“This project will see an unused premises in the heart of the city transformed into a busy, welcoming space where people of all backgrounds can come together to celebrate cultural diversity and where community cohesion can be strengthened.”

Work on the café is expected to begin before September. You can read the full details in the ‘News’ section of our website.



Mayor Lilian Seenoi Barr with pupils from St Anne's PS, Chapel Road PS and Oakgrove PS, launching this year's awards.

Pupils help launch Advancing Race Equality Awards 2024

THE North West Migrants Forum's Advancing Race Equality Awards 2024 are open for nominations!

The Advancing Race Equality Awards have become a highlight of the diversity calendar as they celebrate the efforts and achievements of individuals, volunteers, schools, colleges and universities and those working in the public and private sectors.

Pupils from Oakgrove Integrated Primary School, Chapel Road Primary School and St Anne's Primary School helped officially launch the awards alongside Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council and Chief Executive of the North West Migrants Forum, Lilian Seenoi Barr.

"Our aim is to recognise individuals and groups who are making a positive impact on diversity, equity and inclusion across the island of Ireland," said the mayor.

"All too often the outstanding devotion of so many people and organisations towards creating a fairer society and a more just world goes unnoticed.

"The Advancing Race Equality Awards are about putting that right and we look forward to shining the spotlight on our incredible role models and change makers."

In March of this year over 300 people gathered in The Everglades Hotel to see ten awards handed out. *(Continued on next page)*



Some of the style that was on display at the awards in March.



Migrants Forum volunteers Carlos, Diana and their baby son Liam with Ahmed, Sallam and Swar, helping to publicise this year's Advancing Race Equality Awards.



The next Advancing Race Equality Awards ceremony will take place on March 6 with nominations being accepted across the following categories:

Anti-Racism School of the Year

Anti-Racism Teacher of the Year

Anti-Racism Art Ambassador of the Year (Primary School)

Anti-Racism Art Ambassador of the Year (Secondary School)

Young Leader

Community Champion of the Year

Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness

Anti-Racism Media Award

Anti-Racism Leader of the Year

Lifetime Achievement

A new award has also been introduced - the North West Migrants Forum's Special Recognition Prize. The inaugural winner was Sarah Roberts who was chosen for the courageous stand she took against an anti-migrant agitator in west Donegal.

Ms Roberts said, "The Advancing Race Equality Awards are the most amazing way of recognising individuals and organisations who work day in, day out to create a society that is better for all of us. "If you know anyone who is worthy of such recognition, please do nominate them."

To nominate someone or to sponsor an award, go to the North West Migrants Forum website, www.nwmf.org.uk or email us at areawards@nwmf.org.uk.

Migrants Forum appointed All-Party Group Secretariat

THE North West Migrants Forum (NWMF) has been appointed secretariat of an All-Party Group established to promote the rights of those from minoritised backgrounds and to tackle policy issues that impact ethnic minority communities.

The All-Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities enables organisations like NWMF to engage with decision makers on how to move forward towards a Northern Ireland that is vibrant, diverse and inclusive for all.

Chairing it is Kate Nicholl of the Alliance Party with Dr Steve Aiken of the UUP in post as Vice-Chair. Representatives of a wide range of bodies met in Parliament Buildings in June to hear the Migrants Forum introduced as secretariat.

Addressing those gathered, our CEO Lillian Seeno Barr spoke of the vile abuse she suffered following her recent appointment as Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council.

Northern Ireland was experiencing “turbulent times” marked by rising anti-migrant sentiment, she said. But it was also evolving and that was something to be embraced rather than opposed.

“I want to thank local leaders, particularly Colum Eastwood, Doug Beattie and First Minister Michelle O’Neill not just for condemning such behaviours on social media but also for contacting me directly with their support.

“But while warm words are important, actions speak louder. Leaders like First Minister Michelle O’Neill can use their public roles to counter misinformation, especially in the age of social media.

“They should promote the benefits of diversity and respect for differences, highlighting the economic benefits that migrants and minoritised communities make.

“The All-Party Group is a critical tool for actively promoting equality, mutual respect and human rights for all.

“It is essential that we also actively highlight the numerous contributions that black and minoritised communities make to our society every day,” Mayor Barr added.



Pictured at the event in Stormont during which NWMF was announced as secretariat of the All-Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities, are, L-R: Joint NWMF/CAJ Research and Campaigns Worker Shannon Doherty, Mayor Lillian Seeno Barr and Kate Nicholl MLA.



Above and below: Some of those who gathered in Stormont’s Long Gallery for the event.



English classes proving extremely popular with NWMF members



English teacher Helen Warby using flashcards to teacher her students.

THANKS to the dedication of our volunteers we are continuing to offer free English classes.

There has been a huge demand for the sessions since they were launched in May, with dozens of people availing of lessons.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Carol Anne O’Kane, Paul Bonar, Helen Warby and finally Liam Burns who provides Pop-Up English lessons, for giving us their time and expertise.

Classes continue each Monday, 1-2pm with Helen and on Thursdays, 5-7pm with Carol-Anne. Pop-Up English is each Tuesday, 3pm onwards.

Newcomers are always welcome to join in.



Paul Bonar putting one of his students through their paces.

Beverly represents North West Migrants Forum at Mastery Foundation conference

OUR board member and volunteer Beverly Simpson was our representative at a three day intensive course run by the Mastery Foundation in May. The conference brought together a broad base of community workers and volunteers already working on peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. As always, thank you for representing us Beverly.



SUMMER CLUB FUN

Sing it loud - The kids are alright, the kids are alright!

DOZENS of young people have been enjoying an array of fun activities at our summer club.

With the help of summer club co-ordinators Adrián Baena, Aoife Greenberg, Caitlín O'Doherty, Molly Harper, Ahmed Osama and Nareyan Kina, children aged seven to 15 have been wall climbing, playing cricket, they have been to the local bowling alley, the cinema and they have picked up some skills thanks to In Your Space Circus. On top of all that they have been showing off their artistic talent during various workshops and in-house activities.

The summer club, which is funded by the Co-Op Foundation, continues until August 15 and finishes with a two-night residential. The organisers said they were delighted to be co-ordinating the scheme for a second year and said it was a learning experience for all involved.

"Built on tenets of inclusion and diversity, the summer club is about breaking down barriers, bringing young people together and giving them a safe place where they can have fun and make friends.

"Throughout our programme, young people are given opportunities to learn about and spend time in nature through our activities with Far and Wild, to express themselves creatively in art workshops, to push themselves and face their fears at climbing wall sessions and to try new things such as circus skills and cricket. They also have the opportunity to build connections with people from a range of places and backgrounds over the course of the programme - fundamentally providing young people with a host of skills and experiences to build a more inclusive and empowered future, whilst having fun at the same time.

"For us as young adults it is a pleasure to work with the young people in our Summer Club. To get to know them and to watch them develop in confidence and build connections and friendships with one another is very rewarding." Coordinating this scheme has also provided us with invaluable experience in youth work and has hugely built our confidence in positions of responsibility.

"We feel very lucky and grateful to be a part of this wonderful project."



MORE SUMMER SHENANIGANS!



Crowds turn out to enjoy NWMF family fun day!

BROOKE Park was the venue on July 27 for our family fun day - And what a day it turned out to be! Hundreds of people from the local community gathered to enjoy the free barbecue, bouncy castles, face painting, singing circle and other activities made possible through funding provided by Bank of Ireland and the National Lottery's Community Fund. It was also an opportunity for us to launch our Intercultural Café (See page one). Work on the café will begin before September and we will keep you posted on developments. Exciting times ahead!



Migrants Forum says thank you to its volunteers

MAYOR and our Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr helped us celebrate the tireless work of our volunteers in June.

In her first official engagement with the charity she established in 2012 since becoming First Citizen, Mayor Barr presented certificates and gifts to those who have helped the organisation in one capacity or another over the past 12 months.

“You are the reason the Migrants Forum has been able to continue with the work it was set up to do, she told those gathered in NWMF headquarters.

“You are the reason it has grown into the organisation it is, one that provides help and understanding to people from all over the world every day.

“And while I know that you choose to volunteer selflessly and without expectation of reward, we want to thank you. We want you to know just much your dedication is appreciated and how grateful we are to have you with us.

“Whether you are a long-term volunteer or if you have only got involved with this organisation recently, and regardless of how many hours you choose to give, it is important that you know that what you do is bringing about positive change in this city and beyond.

“Please know that your time, your help and your efforts are recognised, appreciated, valued and cherished,” said the Mayor.



Rula Omar receiving her thank you gift.



Ei Mon Thant being recognised for her efforts.



Chair of the NWMF Board, Marija Stuke.



Seun Awonuga all smiles with Mayor Barr.



All those who received tokens of thank you for their time and effort over the past year.

‘This is our home now’

Iranian couple Ali and Sima talk about leaving Iran and their hopes for a new life in Derry

A key aim of the North West Migrants Forum has always been to promote the benefits of migrants and minoritised communities. The tricky part has been to convince others to do the same. When we drew up an article to assist us with our goal, we could never have guessed how positive a reaction it would receive both from the media and the public generally.

The story was that of Ali Hoseini, wife Sima and their daughter and how the Iranian couple recently opened a food shop on Derry’s Sackville Street.

In the article Ali and Sima spoke of leaving their native Iran, setting up home here and their desire to simply live a quiet life, run their business and see little Diana - who was born in Derry - grow and flourish.

The down-to-earth interview captured huge attention thanks to two pages in the Derry Journal, a page in the Derry News and online at Belfast Live where it received hundreds of comments and likes.

Here is a shortened version of the interview with Ali Hoseini but you can read the full piece here: www.nwmf.org.uk/news/

“I came to Derry because my friend had a restaurant here and he offered me a job. And I’m very happy here. It’s a beautiful city, everything is handy to get to and the people are so friendly,” said Ali.

“We decided to open the shop because there are a lot of Muslims here in the city and no one else was doing it, no one else had an Arabic shop or a halal shop. We were the first.

“We buy our stock in from London, Dublin, Belfast, all over. And we get people from the Arabic community, the Iranian community, Indian and Kurdish but also from Derry because they know what we sell is fresh, it is good quality and it is not expensive. We know that people don’t have a lot of money so we try to keep our prices as low as possible.

“Five years ago you had very few refugees here. For a long time I didn’t meet any other Iranians but now you have around 25 families and 20 individuals.

“And it’s good for Derry because it means variety and it means different cultures, different languages, different foods.

“Before, all you had were chip shops and takeaways. Now you have all these new foods and you need that, you need new foods and new dishes. Iran has over 600 foods and tastes, Arabic is the same, Turkish is the same, hundreds and hundreds of foods.

“Of course I miss Iran, every day my mind is in Iran. I lost my father last year and the rest of my family is still there. It’s hard for me and my wife but this is our home now.

“We have been here a long time and we are happy here. We want to pay our taxes and contribute to society like everyone else. We love Derry, we love the people and we want to be part of the community.”



Ali, Sima and Diana in the Asia Food Store International on Sackville Street. Below: Nigerian palm oil, just one of the items you will find difficult to source in many other more traditional NI shops.



The shop also stocks a range of sheesha pipes, used for smoking tobacco.

Our role in making Little Amal a true Derry doll!

WE were contacted earlier this year by the team behind Little Amal, asking if we could help bring her to Derry. What ensued was a scramble by our Research and Campaigns Officer Shannon Doherty to secure permission from no fewer than five different departments. Weeks later and with all boxes ticked, Little Amal - a globally recognised symbol of human rights who has travelled the world bringing hope to the vulnerable and dispossessed - walked across the Peace Bridge for the first time ever.

Amal, a puppet representation of a ten-year-old refugee, was created to highlight the plight of millions of people like her, in particular displaced children fleeing war zones and poverty.

Since being brought to life Amal has traversed 16 countries and over 160 cities, from Adelaide to Athens and from New York to Naples. Since July 2021 she has been welcomed by two million people on the street and by tens of millions online.

During her first to Derry she walked from Ebrington to Guildhall before moving on to Free Derry Corner. Hundreds of people turned out to see her and to get their photograph taken.

Following a busy day the team behind Little Amal tweeted their thanks to the North West Migrants Forum and the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) for their help in making it happen.

It is an event we are delighted to have been part of and one we will cherish for many years to come.



Above: A poignant moment on the Peace Bridge.
Below left: On Derry's famous Rainbow Crossing and below: Our CEO Lilian leads Amal to the Guildhall.



Bits 'n' bobs

A photographic trail of what we have been up to recently...



In May we hosted a roundtable discussion in Belfast in collaboration with Ulster University. The event was an opportunity to discuss the role of our elected representatives, particularly prospective Westminster candidates. From it we were able to develop a pledge encouraging our elected representatives to challenge the hostile environment and be mindful of rhetoric which undermines community cohesion and contributes to anti-immigration sentiment. They were also asked to mainstream racial equality and to confront racist intimidation and hate crime where they find it.



Some of those who completed a four-week basic course in coding in collaboration with Kainos. The course focused on basic coding and programming skills and those who completed were rewarded with an official certificate.



We had NI Office Permanent Secretary Julie Harrison and her assistant Rebecca join us in May. Many topics were covered during what was a very productive meeting. From left: Julie Harrison, NWMF CEO Lilian Seenoi Barr and NWMF Integration and Welfare Officer Gaele Gormley.



On June 5 we had the super-talented Sima Serkachi join us to show members how they can cook on a budget. Our offices have never smelt as glorious!



Above: Safeguarding training for staff and members provided by Sustenance Development Consultants and below: First aid training, again provided by Sustenance.



We always make a point of supporting the local economy

Here are just some of the businesses and services the North West Migrants Forum has used over the past three months...

Asia Food International Ltd

Centra

Boyle Office Supplies

PNP Solutions Ltd

Sustenance Development Consultants

Translink

iPrint

Cuthy Diamond

Irena Chernichenko

Tower Museum

Visit Derry

Embassy Property Ltd

Hillbilly Chicken

Brunswick Moviebowl

Doherty's Bakery

Tesco

Able & Flynn Web Design

Foyle Taxis

Exchange Matters

JW Promotional Products

Leona Devine Artist

Derry Well Women

The Works

Paolo's Pizza

Limavady Printing

Far and Wild

Foyle Arena

McGonagle Bus

AS ALWAYS THANK YOU TO ALL OUR **FUNDERS,**
SPONSORS AND VOLUNTEERS.

YOU CAN KEEP UP TO DATE WITH OUR WORK ON
OUR WEBSITE WWW.NWMF.ORG.UK OR ON:

