

CRRA in the Community

By Karen Brodsky

A key word among Charlotte nonprofits is collaboration. Many funders insist on collaborative programs in order to see their dollars go further. CRRA has been fortunate to be involved with Crossroads Charlotte whose mission is "to choose and pursue a future for Charlotte, not just arrive

in one. With an emphasis on creating a community that is accessible to all, inclusive and equitable, the goal of Crossroads Charlotte is to build a trusting, vibrant and sustainable home."

For the last two years, CRRA has joined with a Crossroads Charlotte and other service providers to find ways to make

new arrivals to Charlotte feel welcome and part of the larger community. The focus is IRAI (Immigrant, Refugee, Asylee, and International) communities. At the first meeting representatives from the IRAI community shared stories about frustrations with the city and hopes of being accepted in Charlotte. On its website, Crossroads Charlotte describes the IRAI community: "They're Charlotte's invisible minority. They work, send their children to school and keep to themselves. They're immigrants, but they rarely make it on the news. They are Charlotte-Mecklenburg's refugees and asylees, many of whom fled their countries for fear of persecution. They are internationals and among those who make up Charlotte's diverse population."

Crossroads Charlotte developed a collaborative community engagement effort with IRAI communities and a wide range of service provider agencies/groups that support them to increase access for all and build trust in the community. During this time, many recurring "access-related" themes emerged from the sessions. "Many Cultures One Community," was born of these on-going meetings and consisted of workshops and other events to increase community awareness and trust. The final program was a recent community event on December 3 to highlight the most relevant topics and resources for the IRAI communities. At this event, Crossroads Charlotte in partnership with Mecklenburg Area Partnership for Primary-care Research (MAPPR),

Community Building Initiative (CBI), and Community Relations Committee (CRC), unveiled an online portal for services and organizations serving, in part, the IRAI communities.

"Many Cultures, One Community' has been an opportunity to assess the needs of Charlotte's IRAIs and help them become more integrated into the larger Charlotte communities," said Ana Lucia Divins, project consultant. "We have a lot of silos working and serving the community," Divins said. "It was important to connect the dots."

Added Ellen Dubin, executive director of Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, "We would like the Charlotte community to know that there are refugees here and that there are ways members of the community can help whether they do it individually, through a church, an organization, [or] a company."

As a service provider for refugees CRRA embraced the process and participated in a collaborative community engagement effort with the IRAI communities and service providers who support them with the goal of increasing access for all and to build trust.

Thus, Crossroads Charlotte launched The Mecklenburg Access Portal (The MAP) at a community-wide event at the Northwest School for the Arts. MAP is a web-based resource directory for healthcare and social service providers to access information and resources. The portal will link the IRAI communities to much needed services and link service

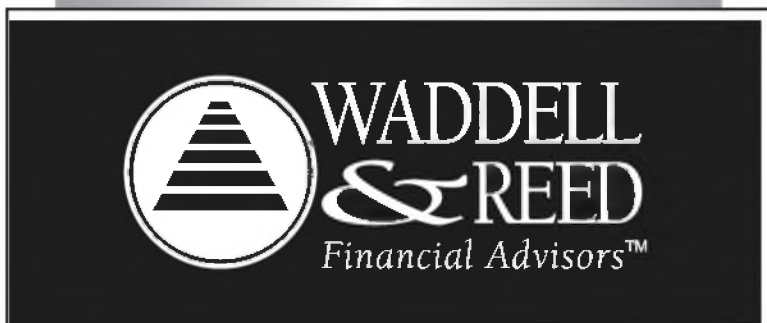
providers to underserved populations.

CRRA participated in three of the Crossroads Charlotte's events. Dubin participated in the press conference in November that kicked off the initiative. CRRA welcomed about 30 community members from all walks of Charlotte as they learned about local nonprofits on a special bus tour. Finally, Dubin was a panel member at the program's culminating event.

"The benefits of this collaboration are many, said Dubin. "CRRA became more visible, more people know about refugee resettlement, and the refugee community has new resources. After resettling refugees for almost 16 years, it is uplifting for me to see the greater community finally to begin to respond to IRAI needs in Charlotte."

Collaborative efforts are multiplying. The Levine Jewish Community Center announced a program for community outreach that began in December. The JCC is responding to the needs in the greater Charlotte community by striking partnerships with other nonprofits. CRRA will also participate in that effort.

CRRA needs your help to continue to provide invaluable services for refugees. In addition to furniture and housewares, the agency needs cash contributions and volunteers to perform its vital work. Please visit our website at www.carolinarefugee.org to donate or call 704-535-8803 for more information. ☆



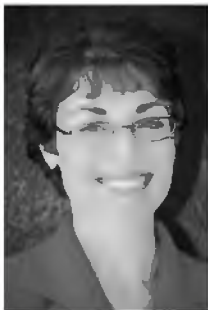
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Award-Winning Films, Speakers Highlight 8th Annual Charlotte Jewish Film Festival

The Charlotte Jewish Film Festival returns February 25-March 11 with quality Jewish film from around the world. Comedies, documentaries, and dramas illuminating the international Jewish experience will once again grace



Some well known "Jews in Toons."

the silver screen right here in the Queen City. Tickets are on sale now at www.charlottejewishfilm.com. An all-festival pass is also available that entitles the pass holder to entrance to all the films at a savings of over \$30. Check out the website to read more about our fantastic lineup of eleven films/events as well as superb speakers and performers who will help to make the 8th Annual Charlotte Jewish Film Festival the best ever.

It's a Global Affair

After months of much discussion and debate, films from Israel, Russia, France, Argentina, the Czech Republic, and the US have made the cut, a reflection of the far-reaching web of the Jewish story. Although the movies have a Judaic bent, the themes are universal and encompass the common human experience. Love, compassion, betrayal, and redemption are just a few of the motifs running through these excellent films.

Speakers and Performers Add Value

Every year the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival brings in exceptional speakers and performers to enhance the Festival experience. This year's speakers promise to be both educational and entertaining as always. On March 1, make sure to join us for "A Lens on Israel: A Society Through Its Cinema"



Mike Reiss, writer/producer of "The Simpsons"

sponsored by Temple Beth El. Dr. Eric Goldman, PhD Cinema Studies, will takes us on a journey

(Continued on next page)

TAUCK
EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISING

Springtime in France

<p>French Waterways & Vineyards 10 Days (7-night cruise, 2 hotel nights Paris) - April 18</p> <p>French Waterways & Vineyards - "A Taste of France" (same as above w/ Culinary Themed Departure) - April 25</p>	<p>French Escapade: Paris to Monte Carlo 14 Days (2 hotel nights Paris, 10-day cruise, 2 hotel nights Monte Carlo) - March 31 & May 9</p> <p>French Escapade: Monte Carlo to Paris 14 Days (2 hotel nights Monte Carlo, 10-day cruise, 2 hotel nights Paris) - April 9 & May 18</p>
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