



Annual Report - 2017

Welcoming Gainesville Inc.

**(d/b/a Welcoming Gainesville &
Alachua County)**

SETTING

Welcoming Gainesville Inc. began as a non-profit 501(c)(3) in 2015 “to initiate and administer programs, projects, and events and provide services to make Gainesville an inclusive community. . .including immigrants and refugees”. [See page 11 for legally required declaration regarding Welcoming Gainesville Inc.]

We do business as Welcoming Gainesville & Alachua County, “WG&AC”. This is because the Gainesville City Commission took action (Feb.18 and March 17, 2016) to designate Gainesville as a Welcoming City, to join the Welcoming America network, and to designate Welcoming Gainesville, Inc. as the civic agency to put those decisions into action. The Alachua County Commission took counterpart action in June 2016. Thus Gainesville and Alachua County both are part of the Welcoming America network of municipalities.

MISSION RELEVANCE AND NEED

As 2017 opened, the need for a civic group like WG&AC was apparent – and urgent. National policy had created a hostile environment for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. That environment threatened economic and social progress in business, agricultural, academic, and other sectors of Gainesville and Alachua County. In contrast, WG&AC is dedicated to fostering a community of neighbors from people who have come here from around the world and to combating ethnic, religious, and racial prejudice.

WG&AC responded to the challenges in 2017 with events, programs, and actions. These were aimed to build, as our by-laws state, “a climate of welcome and support for all persons fleeing violence in their homelands and assist resettlement agencies in welcoming refugees and integrating them into the community.” WG&AC’s focus in 2017 was to make the by-law commitment real: We pursued “work with faith communities, government agencies, community institutions, and business leaders to combat every form of ethnic, racial, and religious prejudice”.

Interns and volunteers made it possible to do as much as we did. We are proud to outline those achievements below. But despite the more than

generous contributions of friends and institutional partners, we were unable to retain salaried staff to support fund-raising, coordinate existing programs, and initiate new efforts. *WG&AC needs more such friends and partners.*

At the Welcoming America Interactive Conference (Atlanta, April 2017), Daniel Valdez, Welcoming America Southeastern Coordinator, praised WG&AC for accomplishing so much without any governmental staff or funds.

So 2017 story in a nutshell is this: Much was done. The promise and early successes of WG&AC have caught the hearts and imagination of many community members. There is much more to be done. We are committed to meeting that need, if only we had resources (staff and funds) to grow and sustain the work.

PROJECTS AND POTENTIAL

Welcoming Yard Signs

Yard signs with the message “No matter where you are from we’re glad you’re our neighbor” in Arabic, English, and Spanish were the most successful project in 2017. The signs originated with Immanuel Mennonite Church (Harrisonburg VA). They had spread rapidly to other communities when Board member Sam Trickey brought the idea to WG&AC in November 2016. The Virginia church deliberately had not copyrighted the signs



and provided a printable format. Alta Systems of Gainesville offered a good price so we placed a modest 50 sign order in January 2017. By September we had sold about 750 yard signs that could be seen all over the city and suburbs. Richard Spencer’s visit (Oct. 19, 2017) created fresh demand that led to an order of another 200 signs.

At a requested \$10 donation apiece versus \$6 cost,

WG&AC had a small but steady income from sign distribution throughout 2017.

The deeper purpose of the yard signs is to help people make their own statement that Gainesville and Alachua County are Welcoming Municipalities. One woman who placed a sign in her front yard heard a knock at the door a few minutes later. It was a Somali woman who lived down the street. They had never met. With tears, the Somali told our supporter how much the yard sign meant to her.



That exemplifies the deeper reason for the yard sign project.

English Conversation Partners

An early participant in the conversation partners program told how she had been paired with a Saudi Arabian woman. A year and a half later they were still meeting regularly and had become close friends. This was our intention for the program: to improve both language skills and human relations.



At the outset of 2017, the program was in good shape under the direction of Tate Quinones. It had engaged about 40 native speakers and internationals who sought to improve their spoken English. Since Tate planned to leave Gainesville for Intensive Arabic studies in Amman, Jordan during summer 2017, we recruited Elizabeth Pantaleon to take her place, but she resigned soon thereafter. Cynthia Karle and Dianne Walsh kept the program alive through the summer, when Jennifer Schroeder of the Univ. Florida English Language Institute took the helm. The program has continued to flourish since then. Some forty English Language Conversation Partners gathered at the Mennonite Meeting house December 3, 2017 for a holiday dinner and sharing about their experience.

This program was supported by a generous grant from Gainesville Regional Utilities.

Refugee Film Festival

In partnership with the Univ. Florida Center for European Studies, we hosted this event at the Hippodrome State Theatre, Gainesville. Originally scheduled for successive Tuesdays in February and March, five films that illustrated the plight of refugees attempting to reach Europe were shown on scattered available dates in March, April, and May.

“The Sultan and the Saint”

As a contribution to interfaith understanding, WG&AC board member Aqueela Khuddus arranged for the local premiere of “The Sultan and the Saint,” a new film about the historic meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and the Sultan of Egypt. It was shown at Univ. Florida J. Wayne Reitz Union February 28, 2017, and drew a substantial audience. As sponsor of the event, a WG&AC representative spoke and we had a literature table, including yard sign sales.

Evangelical Immigration Table

Rev. Alan Cross of National Association of Evangelicals spoke at Parkview Baptist Church April 6, 2017. WG&AC sponsored the event as an outreach effort to let the Evangelical faith community share what they are doing to assist refugees and incorporate newcomers and immigrants into local society. Organizers were Rev. Greg Magruder, Ben Lowe, and Josh Wilson, with support from Board President Richard MacMaster. Alan Cross returned for a second public meeting at Parkview Baptist Church August 3, 2017. A third meeting October 27 brought representatives of different churches together to explore cooperative action, especially as regards DACA.

Welcoming Week

Controversy about Richard Spencer’s scheduled hate rally at Univ. Florida somewhat overshadowed September events until Hurricane Irma

forced cancellation of all events. Welcoming Week went ahead with an interfaith collection for refugees resettled in Jacksonville by Catholic Charities coordinated by Univ. Florida intern Grace Chun. Mayor Lauren Poe and County Commissioner Ken Cornell proclaimed Welcoming Week in the city and county at City Hall September 18. Eastside High School student Sika Essegbey and representatives of Univ. Florida student organizations also spoke. We joined with Baker Interfaith Friends for a discussion of their program of visiting detainees awaiting deportation hearings in Baker County Jail (University Lutheran Church, September 19). We had a screening of “8Days 8Borders,” a film about Syrian refugees traveling to Germany, on the Univ. Florida campus, September 20. The week’s educational events closed with a report by Cindy Nelly, Gainesville Nurse-practitioner, at the Mennonite meeting house September 24. She spoke about her work the previous summer in besieged Mosul, Iraq and with refugees in Lebanon.

Working with the City of Gainesville

Mayor Lauren Poe invited representatives of WG&AC to meet with City Commissioners, the City Manager, and other city officials for a session at City Hall November 9 to explore ways for closer cooperation between WG&AC and the city. As a start the “Mayor’s Longest Table” luncheon at Depot Park December 2 showcased WG&AC.

The city’s response to the many people forced to leave their homes in Puerto Rico because of devastation caused by Hurricane Maria was our first focus. Mayor Poe extended a welcome to all these “storm refugees,” but fewer than a hundred families and individuals came here, mainly to reunite with family members. WG&AC partnered with Fran Ricardo and Rural Women’s Health Project to produce a user-friendly Spanish-language guide to resettlement in Gainesville.

“Immigrants of Gainesville”

WG&AC sponsored an exhibit of Renee Hoffinger’s “Immigrants of Gainesville” photographs at Third House Books. The opening reception December 1 was part of the Gainesville ArtWalk and drew a large crowd.

COMMUNICATIONS

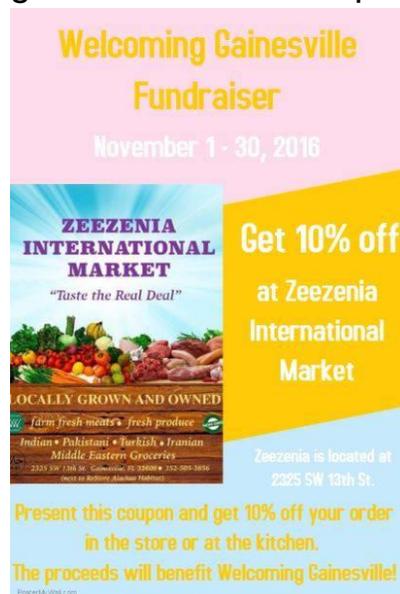
Liz Getman, and Board members Randy Wells and Steve Kalishman drafted a one-page description of WG&AC's purpose and recent activities which helps introduce our work broadly and encourages volunteering with us.

In Feb. and March, Liz Getman and Lori Gibbons did a redesign of WG&AC's logo to be a stylized luggage tag with a heart symbol intertwined with the "W" of Welcoming. The website and Face-Book pages both were updated to have graphical consistency.

Board members Steve Kalishman, Aqueela Khuddus, and Randy Wells were interviewed for the Ilene Silverman Show, which was aired on May 12, 2017, on WUFT-TV.

FUNDRAISING

We began a membership program, based on 352, the area code for Alachua County. Individuals are \$3.52 per month (\$42.24 per year), families are three times that (\$10.56 per month; \$126.72 per year) and businesses and organizations ten times (\$35.20 per month; \$422.40 per year). Payment is via PayPal or direct donation. Liz Getman did most of the work on the membership promotional handouts. She and Randy Wells set up the PayPal account. Though well-received by those who heard about it, growth in memberships has been hampered by lack of staff.



During 2017 Liz Getman worked on and submitted proposals for grants to support major WG&AC projects.

"No Roosters in the Desert," a play by immigration lawyer Kara Hartzler about four women crossing the Sonora desert into Arizona, offers a way to present the humanity of undocumented immigrants. A successful application for a grant from Visit Gainesville enabled us to secure Ann Kinnebrew as director and begin moving toward a full-scale production in 2018. Liz Getman and Ann Kinnebrew did the bulk of the application drafting.

Based on feedback from the Bishop, a grant proposal to the Catholic Campaign on Human Development of the Diocese

of St. Augustine was rewritten by Liz Getman with a bit of assistance from Sam Trickey. It requested funds to underwrite a variety of projects, including the “No Roosters” play, cross-cultural dinners, and photographic exhibits in 2018-2019. As of Dec. 2017 review had not been received.

We also applied to the Satchel’s Foundation and the Pamphalon Foundation. The Satchel’s proposal was unsuccessful (only one project is awarded annually). The Pamphalon proposal was not funded but an unconditional gift of \$500 was provided.

Although we appealed to the General Policy Committee of the City Commission for help in opening the doors to serious conversations with major local donors, no opportunities materialized.

Funding remains our biggest single challenge. So far, WG&AC has lived the organizational equivalent of paycheck-to-paycheck. Our staff has literally lived that way. The result is instability; see Personnel Changes below. The reality at the end of 2017 was even clearer than at the end of our first year (2016): we need sustained funding to continue and increase long-term, high-impact operations. Far more opportunities and needs have been laid before the Board than we can handle with volunteers, no matter how talented and deeply committed.

LOOKING FORWARD

This year we re-organized from a large Board, which proved to be cumbersome, to a smaller Board and an Advisory Council. The task now is to make that work.

We have had, and continued to have, remarkably able and committed interns. For example, volunteer Sally Foote initiated a program for international students to be invited to local homes for meals. Intern Rachael Borman worked with Univ. Florida International Student Advisor Debra Anderson to plan it.

Intern Grace Chun laid the groundwork for a series of dinners built around the cultural heritage of different immigrant groups. The initial dinner in 2018 will be built around a speaker on Pakistani culture with traditional dishes and a lesson on preparing one simple dish.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

At the end of Dec. 2016, Paula Roetscher, the first WG&AC staff member, resigned for personal reasons and concerns about salary insecurity. Her service was detailed in the 2016 Annual Report.

Liz Getman, at that time a member of the Board of Directors, volunteered her expertise with social media and communications generally to take up some of the loose threads left by Paula's departure. Liz gradually took on more duties, notably fund-raising and grant-proposal-writing. She updated our website and facebook page and with Lori Gibbons redesigned our logo. Liz was responsible for writing and rewriting all of our successful grant applications. In August 2017 she became Program Coordinator for WG&AC with a small honorarium and no benefits. She continued through the remainder of 2017. When it became apparent that the financial instability continued and that WG&AC could not guarantee even her modest honorarium a month in advance, she resigned effective December 31, 2017.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT – 2017

Note: Fiscal year = calendar year

Income

Donations (33 donors, 46 donations)	\$ 5,121
Signs & misc. income	\$11,537
Memberships	\$ 1,422
Grants	<u>\$ 2,000</u>
	\$20,080

Expenditures

Fees (Bank,Paypal, Federal, State)	\$ 205
Staff	\$7,317
Events	\$ 777
Yard signs	\$5,899
Miscellaneous	\$ 502
Postage and supplies	\$ 287
Travel	\$ 646
Office space (shared)	\$ 625
Web Presence	\$ 36
Welcoming America	<u>\$ 50</u>
	\$16,344

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Liz Getman, Program Coordinator (2017)

Richard MacMaster, President

Steve Kalishman, Vice President

Randy Wells, Treasurer

Sam Trickey, Secretary

Aqueela Khuddus

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Andy Bachman

Milford Griner

Dan Johnson

David Kaiman

Diana Moreno

Paul Parker

Marihelen Wheeler

REQUIRED DECLARATION

Welcoming Gainesville, Inc., d/b/a Welcoming Gainesville and Alachua County, is a Florida non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, Florida registration number CH47514. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.