

# The PO




**Making History**  
*A Year in Review*  
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# Happy New Year!



# The Portland Observer 42

'City of Roses'  Read back issues of the Portland Observer at [www.portlandobserver.com](http://www.portlandobserver.com) Established in 1970  
Volume XXXXI, Number 52 Wednesday • December 28, 2011 Committed to Cultural Diversity *42 years of community service*

## Sharing Cultures through Art

Social justice group  
builds community

BY MINDY COOPER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
To ensure immigrant artists both preserve and share their cultures, one Portland non-profit is on a mission to create a community filled with inter-cultural learning through art, which they believe is a vital part of community, heritage and family.

Founded in 2008, Colored Pencils Art and Culture collective empowers and supports residents who just moved to the city, often from overseas, to continue to celebrate their backgrounds, despite the challenges often faced when moving to a new country.

"Colored Pencils found the need for a platform for newcomers to showcase their art and tell their stories," said Nim Xuto, co-founder of the volunteer run organization based out of downtown Portland. "And these stories need to be heard."

Xuto, who has lived in the metro area for 25-years, was born in Thailand, where her father taught her art as a young child. "I think



*Nim Xuto promotes community, heritage and families as co-founder of the no-profit Colored Pencils Art and Culture collective.*

art sustains us as human beings," she said. Although talking with someone can reveal a lot about a person, she said you can't really know who an individual is until you hear their story about where they came from, and what happened to their homeland.

"These people never had a stage before," she said. "And now, with the help of the organization, they have been invited to perform their work in many places."

According to Xuto, more than 200 people each month share their stories through po-

etry, paintings, dance and musical performances at their monthly events, which more than 3,000 individuals have been a part of since the creation of the volunteer run non-profit.

Although each artist is unique with their own story, the organization works diligently as a community and brings together artists from all different walks of life under one roof.

"We are a community building process," she said. "The events are intended to have as many racial and nationality groups as

possible. We are a non-profit that builds community through art."

According to Ronault (Polo) Catalani, Xuto's husband and fellow co-founder of the organization, the 'new world,' including the United States, often perceives the role of the artist differently than in other countries.

He said new arrivals to the United States often feel they have to give up their histories, families and cultures to come here, which can

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