

Sharing Cultures through Art

continued ▲ from front

leave individuals vulnerable and broken-hearted.

"What Americans don't seem to understand or appreciate, is that newcomers come here with a boat load of spiritual, social and cultural capital," he said. "But we trade that for financial capital, and in this trade, everyone is enriched. In fact, this is what makes America so creative and vigorous."

Keeping the immigrant artist active is really important to keeping families happy and healthy, he said.

While other organizations use a different kind of method, Colored Pencils is a social justice non-profit that uses art to build a positive community.

Catalani added that every Portlander is welcomed to join in on the mission and showcase their art.

"It's Portlanders of all abilities and disabilities," he said.

The couple recounted a dance performance by an African-American young woman who doesn't have any legs or arms.

"The courage of this woman made us forget she was limbless," said Catalani. "It's about learning to work together to produce an event and overcome historical issues from 8,000 years-ago," he said.

Although immigrants and refugees, whom both Xuto and Catalani refer to as new Portlanders, may be poor economically, he said they are definitely not in poverty.

"We have really rich cultures. We don't want our poor newcomers to slide into a culture of poverty," he said. "Artists are central to stopping that slide."

People immigrate to the United States most often because there is no money to be made in their own countries. Although he said economic integration is a real challenge, if you encourage, engage, and empower people, they will not stay poor long, he said.

"What we want to do is let folks know that once we are in our new country, we need to contribute what we bring from home, such as art and culture," he said. "Listen to the Chinese, Hindi, Russian and Vietnamese."

Xuto said, however, money is not the reason artists create art.

It's all about culture and expression, she said.

For me, we are art, and what we promote is in here," said Xuto, pointing to her heart. "And Colored Pencils ensures that no one has to give up anymore."

As a way to celebrate community and culture in the New Year, the next ColoredPencils multicultural family room evening will be held on Friday, Dec. 30, at McCoy Academy's Open



Nim Xuto, co-founder of Colored Pencils Art and Culture, a volunteer-run organization based out of downtown Portland.

Door Gallery, beginning at 6 p.m.

Featured artists include work by Hispanic Painter Manuel Cobarrubias and African American Photographer Michael Simpson, as well as Bobby Foucher, veteran African-American dancer, choreographer, painter and arts activist.

Traditional African food will be served, as well as performances by poet Norma Alicia Marin Favela, Mr. Americana Gary Marschke, Nepali heart-breaker Gauri 'Raj', Iraqi poet Baher Butti, Balinese traditional performer Novi Leigh, DJ Chatta

Ady, and several spoken word artists.

Prajwal Ratna Vajrachara of the Foundation for Sacred Buddhist Arts of Nepal will also help welcome in the 2012 Dragon Year and celebrate three years of the Colored Pencils Arts & Culture Council putting together Portland's settled and immigrant communities' extraordinary vocabulary in spoken words and on canvas, in fine cuisine, in music, and dance.

"I think Colored Pencils gives people of all cultures within Port-

land an equal opportunity to showcase their work," said Xuto.

"It is time now for us to show who we really are—the colorful

Portlanders."

For more information about the organization and their upcoming event, visit coloredpencilsart.com.

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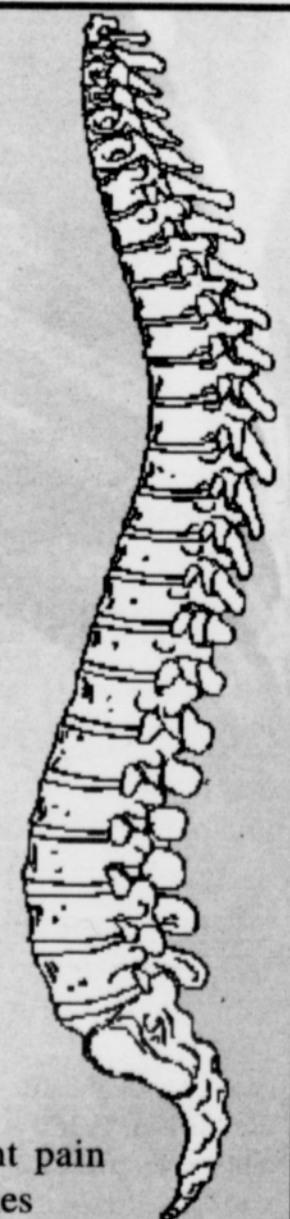
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