

Portland World Cup builds community

By Ryan Nakano
The Asian Reporter

Out near S.E. 164th Avenue in the heat of the day, a soccer ball is kicked around, a language translated, and 10 teenage girls share a field with a common goal — to have fun. “Team Spice.”

Aye Chan May laughs when the name comes up.

“See that down there,” she points to a lone tree at the edge of Lynchview Park in southeast Portland, “It’s an apple tree. As soon as it began to grow and bear fruit, we went after it bringing our own mixture of chili, salt, and other spices from home to season the apples as a snack before practice.”

May, a captain for Team Spice, smiles as she watches her teammates continue to scrimmage under the supervision of coaches Betsy Hornstein and Heidi Kreis.

“Also, all of us are refugees from Southeast Asia, so all of us love spicy food.”

In 2010, May and her family moved from a refugee camp in Thailand to Portland, Oregon.

Since then, more than 7,400 new refugees have arrived in Oregon, according to data collected by the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Like May and her family, many of the refugees who settle in the greater Portland metropolitan area face the challenge of learning a new language and finding a sustainable line of work with very little experience or educational background.

And then, there is the soccer field, the one Team Spice works up a sweat on two days per week. The one that invites youth from all different backgrounds to share space and begin to form community. The one they use to prepare to compete in the Portland World Cup, a free two-day soccer tournament for immigrant and refugee youth organized by the Parks for New Portlanders program.

The goal of the tournament: To allow those who are new to Portland know that Portland belongs to them. Its resources, its fields, all of it belongs to them, at least that’s the way Portland World Cup organizer Som Subedi sees it.

The tournament that kicks off Friday, July 21 at 9:00am at Delta Park, started back in 2009.

One year earlier, Subedi had arrived in Portland after living as a refugee in Nepal, fleeing Bhutan during the “One Nation, One People” policy that expelled the Lhotshampa people in the early ’90s.

Subedi, who grew up playing soccer with upcycled plastic bags in the forest near the refugee camp, felt lost upon his arrival in Portland.

“There was no one to tell us where the clubs were, where soccer was played, or how to get a permit for a park,” Subedi said.

Out of necessity, Subedi began to organize.

In March of 2010, Iraqi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Russian, and Turkish youth



PORTLAND WORLD CUP. Young people on Team Spice practice at Lynchview Park in southeast Portland. The players are training for the upcoming Portland World Cup soccer tournament, scheduled for July 21 and 22 at Delta Park. The annual tournament aims to build community, celebrate diversity and cultures from around the world, and help integrate refugee and immigrant communities into their new lives in the Rose City. (AR Photos/Ryan Nakano)

Dar, one of the original organizers of the Portland World Cup who is also the executive director of the African Youth and Community Organization. “Soccer is team oriented, community is team oriented. That’s our style. We don’t do things alone; we do things together.”

Dar hopes the tournament will return to its grassroots origins, that one day it will become a full blown league. But for now, the city-sponsored celebration continues to draw youth from the community to share in intercultural dialogue in the form of the universal language of soccer.

“Soccer is the international hook to bring all these youth and family together. Now with the political climate, soccer is a political hook,” Subedi said. “There is a fear among immigrant community members here, but soccer is able to bring all of us together. It takes the fear away.”

The Portland World Cup takes place Friday and Saturday, July 21 and 22, at Portland’s Delta Park, located at 10737 N. Union Court in Portland. Members of the community are invited to cheer the youth on at the tournament, which has soccer matches scheduled all day from 9:00am to 8:00pm. To learn more, call Som Subedi at (503) 260-2487 or visit <www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/553563>.

gathered at Mill Park in southeast Portland to play pickup soccer.

One month later, plans for the Portland World Cup were in motion through the grassroots organizing of Subedi, Alejandro Vidalles, Anne Downing, and Jamal Dar.

This year, 22 teams will take the field, 79 games will be played, and six city bureaus will take part as both sponsors and coaching staff for youth between the ages of 14 and 21.

Needless to say, holding the annual community event takes the efforts of more than just Subedi and the original Portland World Cup organizers to pull off.

The Parks for New Portlanders program uses a group of nine youth ambassadors speaking more than 11 languages to reach out to different communities in the greater Portland area. They fill out registration forms and draw on local organizations for support.

In late May, youth began registering for the tournament — some already tied to teams, others placed on teams looking for more players.


“Offsides,” Portland Police Bureau coach Betsy Hornstein calls out at the evening practice at Lynchview Park.


The girls on Team Spice stop their scrimmage. Hornstein begins to explain the position of the last defender and what it means for the offense pushing forward to receive the ball.

May, one of the team captains, translates the rule for the others in Karen and broken Bhutanese. They all laugh

about the English idiom for “cherry-picking.”

“What makes the event great is that it’s driven by community, by individuals,” said





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9			7	6			4
	3					1	
1	2					5	8
			6	3			
7	8					3	9
			8	5			
6	9					7	5
	4					9	
8			5	9			1

Difficulty level: Medium

#97643


Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #26798 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

5	8	2	4	9	3	6	1	7
7	3	9	8	1	6	5	2	4
1	4	6	2	5	7	9	3	8
3	5	4	9	2	1	7	8	6
2	6	7	5	3	8	1	4	9
9	1	8	6	7	4	2	5	3
6	2	1	3	8	9	4	7	5
8	9	5	7	4	2	3	6	1
4	7	3	1	6	5	8	9	2



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