

‘Colored Pencils’ draws many cultures together in East Portland

See what it was like when this *‘traveling ethnic arts feast’* landed at IRCO, a couple of weeks ago ...



Chhunny Sok, vice president of Cambodian American Community Oregon, and Robin Hibbs, a volunteer who works with youth programs at IRCO, welcome visitors to the outer East Portland edition of “*Colored Pencils*”.

Story and photos by David F. Ashton, East Portland News

“Colored Pencils” is a monthly, art and culture gathering that started in January. The event has “toured” Portland, stopping on the last Friday of each month a different location.

On September 25, Colored Pencils landed at 10301 NE Glisan Street, at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) Skills Center.

“*Colored Pencils* brings together fine arts and performing arts with family,” said IRCO’s community development coordinator, Joseph Santos-Lyons.



Joseph Santos-Lyons, Aimee Santos-Lyons, and Carmen Madrid — *Colored Pencils*' program director — pause for a photo, before the formal program begins.



Fused glass artist Terry Batte shows of some of her handiwork.

“This event brings together a broad sector of society,” Santos-Lyons explained. “It’s an event that is inclusive of folks that are refugees and immigrants, and new arrivals. The idea is to give them a place to share, not only living here in America, but also giving back to sharing their own cultural capital – their art, music, dance and foods.”

Portland hosts the fastest-growing communities of people of color in the State, Santos-Lyons observed. “But we have very few places to connect deeply and authentically. This space is good, because it brings together both multicultural Portland and more-mainstream Portland.”



Greeting card artist Bobby Foucher says, of his artwork, “I’ve always been a designer. I’ve designed clothing, paint, and graphics. It’s just one of my natural inclinations to just create something.”



For just a few dollars, guests enjoy a dinner prepared by Michoacan Mexican Restaurant, and served by Mario Navarete and Maria Estella Aguilar.

Specifically, Santos-Lyons continued, the event “sets a new tone” of cultural acceptance in Portland. “By creating this space, it says that we’re able to have a multicultural group of people come together, and support leadership from different communities. This shows the next generation that we can live in harmony.”



Gary Marschke, one of the *Colored Pencils* MCs, sings one of his favorite Tony Bennett songs.

Inside the hall, we were greeted by Gary Marschke, one of the *Colored Pencils* MCs, as well as VP of Northeast Portland Business Association, and inveterate community event promoter.

“I bring a piece of Americana to the events,” Marschke told us. “I was there when the discussion for this first started, and was asked to become part of the team. This is a truly inclusive group: Look! I’m here!”

To learn more about this fascinating cultural program, visit the website: [CLICK HERE](#).



The *Colored Pencils* events provide a comfortable setting for multicultural intermingling.