

Cross-Cultural Communities' Lunch Report

On Friday 27th January, people from community groups and organisations across Southampton gathered for a bring-and-share lunch hosted by Cross-Culture Hub CIC. Participants were invited to bring a dish from their own culture, as well as a table decoration if they wanted. Over 50 people attended at the YMCA Newtown Centre in St Mary's.

The morning was a chance to meet local residents, as well as hear about all of the amazing work that is happening around the city to improve lives, take care of people's health and wellbeing, and build stronger, more equal communities.

Ling Salter from Compassionate Cuppa CIC opened the program by telling the importance of bringing the communities together and creating a Cultural Harmony in the society.

Ling Salter then invited Cross-Culture Hub's founder, Nagina Kaleem, who by introducing her work, shared her vision to work for the integration of the immigrants into the society and how we can start intergenerational cooking to motivate people to come out of their comfort zones and participate in equipping next generation with cooking skills and healthy eating habits.

Nagina also told the participants that the partnership of the YMCA, Cross-Culture Hub and Rotary Social Innovation is aimed at revitalizing the community of Newtown and Nicholston by bringing residents of diverse cultures together and fostering a sense of unity and inclusion through the power of food.

Steve Watson, the Community Manager of YMCA, talked about the YMCA's history and work. He told the audience that,

"The YMCA came into being on 6th June 1844 and the YMCA Southampton was formed in 1878 we have been supporting good causes within the community ever since. The commitment we have within the Newtown centre and its surrounding areas is of high importance and we feel having a centre that has its focuses on inclusion and offers a bridge from diversity is a great way to build a stronger future for all generations and cultures going forward.

That is why we have partnered with the Cross-Culture Hub and Rotary Social Innovation among other like-minded organisations whose moral aims and objectives align with our own. There is so much potential for greatness and together we will see it."

Later Janice Mason from Rotary invited the participants to share their thoughts, taking into consideration three aspects: What they thought about the day, ideas they would be taking back to make a difference in their own work and thought about what we could do together in partnership with others in the room:

What they liked about the Cross-Culture Lunch

- Cucumber sandwiches
- Great! Let's do it again!!
- Wonderful, Collaborative cultural exchange, fantastic food!
- Butter bread with a spoon – a new ideal that I was told about today

Ideas to develop

- Offer creative arts in different parts of the city
- Encourage people to speak English, maybe help with the English Language
- At Voice FM the door is open to the community
- Intergenerational cooking – Communicate do intergenerational activities around Southampton and would be interested in being involved

- Talking about death before you need to, different for different cultures and learning from each other how best to approach this.
- Asylum seekers are not allowed to work or do voluntary work, but they want to keep busy and need opportunities to do this.
- To work together to create a Southampton Food Festival.

Nagina Kaleem invited each of the participants to share their stories, either about their organisations or their interests and about the food they brought.

Representatives from more than 16 different organisations, as well as local residents and supporters of Cross-Culture Hub, stood up to share. It was eye-opening and inspiring to hear about all the initiatives happening in our city, including community radio, tackling loneliness, caring for those experiencing cancer or dementia, driving public involvement in health services, combating sexual violence and FGM, supporting young people and families, storytelling for mental health, social prescribing – and much, much more!

There was also an amazing array of tempting food – ranging from British classics such as Yorkshire pudding, apple crumble and Bakewell tart to daals, curries, pakoras, stews, sweets and snacks from all around the world. Hearing everyone's delicious descriptions of their dishes helped to build up a good appetite, and when lunchtime came everyone was more than ready to dig in.

Over lunch participants were able to spend time talking and connecting with others around the room.

There was a large world map where attendees could place pins to show the many different places they had come from, highlighting the diversity of nationalities and cultures around the room. Countries captured on the map included: Antigua, England, Gujarat, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Scotland, Sri Lanka, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, Wales, Zambia, Fiji.



Participants were also asked to think about their Cultural shocks and hang over a crochet lace which participants took part in making during the session.

It was a fantastic opportunity to share ideas and experiences, and to start exploring all the ways in which different organisations could support each other. With so many connections to make – and so many delicious dishes to try – it felt like just the beginning of discovering new possibilities. Hopefully this cross-cultural lunch will be the first of many.

As the event drew to a close, Tim Mason from Rotary, took the opportunity to officially thank all the attendees and express his appreciation for the event and the potential it holds for future collaborations:

“How exciting it is to see what happens when our community leaders from different cultures come together to explore how we can build stronger communities. This opportunity to share using food from our diverse communities has shown a new way to connect and explore new ideas of how we can work together.”

From this event we want to build a collaborative Southampton Food Festival to engage with people in our communities whilst building greater awareness and peace. We also continuing to look at how we can use Asset Based Community Development to build stronger communities with the many talents, skills and experiences that people will bring to this work.

Thank you for coming and we look forward to this collaboration developing as we build on this cultural event in the future with the many opportunities that will develop from the contacts we have made.”

Overall, the Cross-Culture Hub’s communities’ lunch was a successful event that highlighted the importance of bringing different communities together and building stronger, more equal communities. It showcased the diversity of Southampton and opened up possibilities for collaboration and cooperation between organisations to be able to reach out and empower local residents. The event has paved the way for a collaborative Southampton Food Festival, and it is hoped that more events like this will be held in the future.

Please come back with more exciting and practical ideas to make this vision a reality.

