Storytelling event connects community across cultures

by By Jenna Whetzel Moab Sun News
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For a town of just over 5,000 residents, Moab is composed of citizens who hail from diverse cultures, backgrounds, nationalities and ideologies. On Saturday, June 30, at 5:30 p.m., the Moab Valley Multicultural Center (MVMC) will celebrate the diversity of our small desert oasis at its brand-new event, Dialogues of Diversity: Multicultural Stories of Strength.

The event, which was made possible by the Moab Arts Council, Sheri Griffith River Expeditions and Dominion Energy, was inspired by The Hispanic Women’s Project of Telluride and its production of stories from local immigrant women.
Five local residents will share their stories of “being new,” the event’s theme that will set the tone for the evening performance.

All five stories come from the performers’ experience of “moving to Moab, moving to a foreign country or moving from a foreign country to the United States,” said MVMC Executive Director Rhiana Medina.

“This will be a smaller, more intimate event that focuses on stewardship,” Medina said.

“We picked storytellers by brainstorming what community members we knew had interesting stories, but perhaps didn’t have an outlet to share them,” said Quincy Masur, MVMC education coordinator.

All five storytellers have been paired with a MVMC staff member.

“It has been such a pleasure hearing the story from my assigned storyteller,” Medina added. “It has made me appreciate the craft of storytelling. I have found so many parallels to my own life.”

Collaboratively, MVMC team members have engaged with their performers to create an entertaining experience.

“I hope that their stories offer new perspectives, yet illuminate common feelings and experiences,” said outreach coordinator Joanna Onorato.

Though this event celebrates our differences, it also highlights how connected people are.

“I think [diversity] is important because we’re all neighbors. Living in a diverse community encourages understanding and respect,” Onorato said.

The MVMC’s mission is to build bridges across language and culture through family support, community collaboration and education.
“The more similarities we can find between us, the less conflict we will have,” Masur said.

The three women and two men who will be sharing their unique perspectives on “being new” come from a variety of ages, cultures and nationalities.

“I have been working with a man who grew up on the Navajo reservation,” Masur said. “He had a really unique childhood, growing up herding sheep, without electricity and witnessing fascinating traditions.”

“As times change and tensions rise, we must remember that beneath different skin colors and heritages, we are all still humans,” added Masur.

“This is a great event to dip your toes in with what we’re doing,” Medina said.

The MVMC helps Moab residents in need through programs that focus on language and life skills, cultural education and outreach, youth education and outreach, interpretation and translation, and crisis resource and advocacy.

“The center is for everybody,” Medina said. “This event is a good example of that inclusivity.”

There are only 100 seats available for this event, so people are encouraged to buy their tickets early.

The event will be held at the MARC and will include a dinner prepared by Sheri Griffith River Expeditions after the show. Tickets are $35 and all proceeds benefit advocacy programs provided by the MVMC.

5 local storytellers share diverse performances at Moab Valley Multicultural Center’s “Dialogues of Diversity: Multicultural Stories of Strength”

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When: Saturday, June 30 at 5:30 p.m.

Where: Moab Arts and Recreation Center (MARC), 111 E. 100 North

Cost: $35

Information: moabmc.org