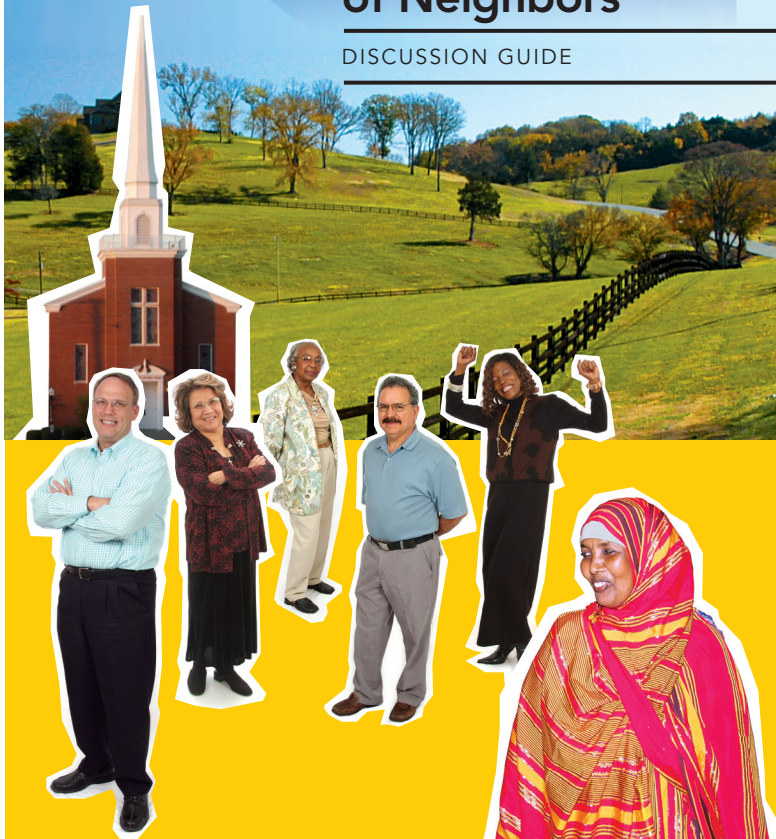


Shelbyville

MULTIMEDIA

Building a Nation of Neighbors

DISCUSSION GUIDE



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WELCOMING
AMERICA 

◆ Building a Nation of Neighbors

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*Billboard from
the Welcoming
Tennessee Initiative*

About “Building a Nation of Neighbors”

“Building a Nation of Neighbors” is a video module adapted from the documentary *Welcome to Shelbyville* that is designed to equip individuals and organizations with story-based tools to better understand the Welcoming model, which was designed by Welcoming Tennessee and is being replicated nationwide by Welcoming America. Using scenes from the documentary by Kim A. Snyder, along with bonus footage and additional interviews, “Building a Nation of Neighbors” presents viewers with greater context behind how Shelbyville became a community committed to building bridges between immigrants, refugees and native-born Americans.

From Welcoming Tennessee to Welcoming America:

Many of the gatherings you see in the module are part of the Welcoming Tennessee Initiative (WTI), a statewide effort developed by the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIIRC) in 2006 to help improve relations between long-term residents and immigrant newcomers. By working with local “welcoming ambassadors” like Luci and Miguel, WTI seeks to pave a two-way street of immigrant integration by building understanding among diverse residents and enhancing communication.

Since its inception, the WTI approach has captured the attention of organizations and individuals in other states across the U.S. dealing with similar challenges related to immigration. This interest eventually led to the development of Welcoming

CONTENTS OF THE MODULE

“Building a Nation of Neighbors” consists of a brief introduction to *Welcome to Shelbyville* and a series of chapters highlighting the Welcoming model. It can be viewed as a whole piece or in segments, depending on your setting and audience:

Welcome to Shelbyville Trailer (3.5 min): a brief introduction to the documentary *Welcome to Shelbyville*, produced and directed by Kim A. Snyder, executive produced by BeCause Foundation, in association with Active Voice.

Chapter 1 How Welcoming Works (4 min): an introduction to the Welcoming model and how it relates to the community of Shelbyville.

Chapter 2 Local Leaders: The Foundation for Welcoming Work (2 min): an overview of how the Welcoming model approaches local leadership development.

Chapter 3 Starting the Welcoming Conversation (4 min): provides context on how the Welcoming model brings immigrants and long-time residents into direct, facilitated contact.

Chapter 4 Welcoming Messages: Changing the Perception of Immigrants (5 min): background on the Welcoming approach of reversing negative images of immigrants by using strategic communications.

Chapter 5 From Neighbors to Friends: Overcoming Common Misunderstandings (5 min): an overview of how to bring together community members to address misunderstandings and stereotypes.

See pp. 7-11 for ideas on different ways you might be able to use these chapters, along with accompanying discussion questions.

A Brief History

America, a national, grassroots-driven umbrella organization created to replicate the success of Welcoming Tennessee across the country. Welcoming America is a network of individuals and organizations working to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans. Its ultimate goal is to create a welcoming atmosphere, community by community, in which immigrants are more likely to integrate into the social fabric of their adopted hometowns. As of 2010, Welcoming America is working in 14 states nationwide.

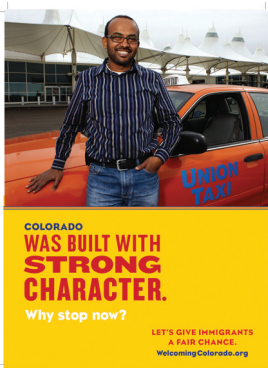
For more information, visit www.welcomingtn.org and www.welcomingamerica.org.

About the Welcoming Model

Welcoming America is a national, grassroots-driven collaborative that works to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and native-born Americans. It works at the local level to weave immigrants into the social fabric of their adopted hometowns by leading thoughtful, candid conversations in which neighbors get to know each other and stronger communities emerge. The network is striving to bring about a society that reflects our deepest values. In essence, it is geared toward building a nation of neighbors.

THE APPROACH

While many past immigrant integration efforts focused specifically on services for the immigrant community, the Welcoming approach aims to reduce anxiety in the receiving community through a process of education and facilitated dialogue with new immigrant neighbors. Through this process, receiving residents cultivate the welcoming environment needed to help immigrants step out of their comfort zones and into the broader society.



Poster from Welcoming America affiliate, Welcoming Colorado

The work focuses on two major segments of the American population:

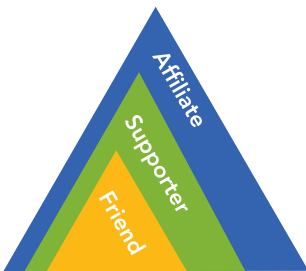
1. **The Untapped:** Those who already see the value of making their community more welcoming to immigrants. Welcoming initiatives work to help these individuals transform these positive sentiments into action, providing them with the tools they need to succeed the Welcoming movement.
2. **The Unsure:** Those who are not sure whether they want to welcome the immigrants living in their communities. Welcoming initiatives work to bring these individuals into direct contact with their new immigrant neighbors. Face-to-face contact tends to help long-time residents see their neighbors in a new light—as partners in building vibrant, caring communities.

THE WELCOMING CONTINUUM: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Welcoming work has many forms and levels of involvement, from individuals who want to incorporate a handful of Welcoming practices in their day-to-day lives, to organizations who want to become full-fledged Welcoming affiliates.

Groups and individuals can get involved with Welcoming work in the following ways:

- **Join Friends of Welcoming.** Friends of Welcoming is an interactive web portal (www.friendsofwelcoming.org) for individuals and organizations who are interested in taking their interest in welcoming newcomers to the next level. Individuals who register online are given access to online Welcoming tools, as well as objectives. As they complete objectives, they will earn “Welcoming points” which will make them eligible for cash prizes to be used to build a full-scale Welcoming initiative, or to support a local immigrant and/or refugee serving organization.
- **Support a Welcoming America Affiliate.** A Welcoming America affiliate is an organization that has successfully applied for affiliate status with Welcoming America and has dedicated a portion of its time and resources to carrying out Welcoming America’s mission. Affiliates help form Welcoming committees in the communities they serve. These committees are made up of individuals from many walks of life – all of whom are ready to work together to make their communities more welcoming to immigrants.
- **Become a Welcoming America Affiliate.** If there is not a Welcoming America affiliate in your community, you could see if there is a local non-profit in your area that would be interested in applying for affiliate status with Welcoming America. If you lead a local non-profit, you may ask your board to apply for affiliate status.



The Welcoming Continuum

If you’re interested in being a part of the Welcoming Continuum, visit www.welcomingamerica.org to learn how you or your organization can get involved.

CORE ELEMENTS OF WELCOMING WORK

Welcoming work is based on a three-pronged approach, which is detailed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the video module:



Leadership Development: empower community members to manage local campaigns, recruit new supporters, train presentation facilitators, fund-raise and communicate externally.



Strategic Communications: disseminate positive messages about immigrants by using multiple channels (e.g., billboards, new media, etc.) to educate and recruit new allies on a mass scale.



Direct Public Engagement: conduct community presentations/dialogues to overturn misconceptions, foster understanding and recruit new allies.

Welcoming America believes that just as fertile soil is needed for a seed to grow, receptive communities are critical if immigrants are to thrive. Most immigrant integration efforts have traditionally targeted immigrants themselves, through English language instruction or job training, for example. Welcoming America focuses instead on the communities where new immigrants have made their homes, helping neighbors based relationships based on trust and understanding. Instead of focusing on the seed, Welcoming America concentrates on preparing the soil in which it will flourish.

For more information and resources, visit www.welcomingamerica.org.

*Welcoming
America poster*



How To Use “Building a Nation of Neighbors”

Because Welcoming work can take many forms, this video module can be used in different ways to meet your needs.

1. The **whole module** gives you a comprehensive look at the Welcoming process and can be used specifically to train staff or volunteers about Welcoming work, or as a way to recruit Welcoming volunteers and ambassadors.
2. The **chapters** are useful if you are short on time or have very targeted goals, such as introducing a funder to your work or sparking conversation at a gathering.

Before you screen, it's important to have a good sense of who your audience is going to be. Take time to think about what their priorities are, and what will resonate with them. The following suggestions are not prescriptive, but are meant to help you consider how this module can help you achieve your goals.

HOW TO USE THE WHOLE MODULE

The whole module, including the abbreviated version of *Welcome to Shelbyville*, runs approximately 25 minutes.

Showing it in its entirety is recommended for groups who have 1) deep interest and investment in Welcoming work, and 2) time for processing and discussion afterwards.

Below are some examples of the types of settings in which you might use the whole module:

- The first or second meeting of a new Welcoming committee, while you are determining your local priorities and want a better sense of what Welcoming looks like in practice.
- A volunteer training session with a group of people who are interested in helping with events or getting the word out about your work.
- Conferences, if you have a longer session of time to present but not enough for the full documentary. These are great opportunities for people to reflect and share on how their involvement in Welcoming work is developing in other places.

HOW TO USE CHAPTERS

If you have less time or have a very specific objective in mind, it may be more appropriate to use the chapters individually. Some are perfect for public use, as introductions or conversation starters for people unfamiliar with the model, and others are great tools for internal use, to spark deeper reflection about how the Welcoming model best applies to your community and constituency.

Chapters for general audiences: The following chapters are suggested for public use, as they give great snapshots of Welcoming work in action but also provide food for thought for anyone. For example, you might use these to show potential funders what your project hopes to achieve or engage a church group in a local activity with newcomers.

CH	TITLE
—	<i>Welcome to Shelbyville</i> Trailer
1	How Welcoming Works
5	From Neighbors to Friends: Overcoming Common Misunderstandings

Chapters for training and implementation: The following chapters are recommended for use with people who are embedded more deeply into the work. They are helpful portrayals of what the three prongs of the Welcoming strategy look like in action, and may be helpful to show before you or your organization begin to implement them.

CH	TITLE	WELCOMING "PRONG"
2	The Foundation for Welcoming Work	Leadership Development
3	Starting the Welcoming Conversation	Public Engagement
4	Welcoming Messages: Changing the Perceptions of Immigrants	Strategic Communications

These chapters can be used to spark many different types of conversations depending on how you facilitate them. See the next section for prompts that will help you define your objectives and reflect on the work you've already done.

Discussion Questions

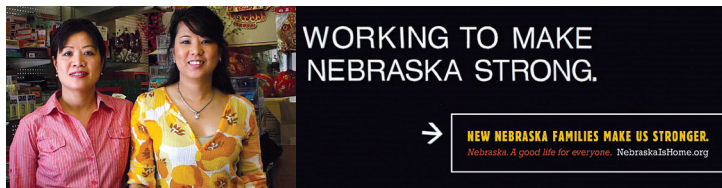
General Conversation Starters

- Which of the characters did you relate to most? Why?
- What scene jumped out at you? Why?
- Think of someone in your life, past or present, who immigrated to this country. Why did they come here? What hardships have they faced as an immigrant in the U.S.?
- Can you think of a time when an early encounter with someone or some group left you initially distrustful, but eventually your trust grew? What do you think made this possible? Are there lessons in this experience that are relevant to the Welcoming efforts of Luci and Miguel?

Chapter 1 - How Welcoming Works

- Stephen Fotopulos mentions “cultural fears and insecurities” that can arise out of demographic shift. What are some of the fears you see or hear about in your community? Where do you most commonly hear these voiced?
- David Lubell says part of Welcoming work is about figuring out underlying values that people of all cultures share. What are some of these underlying values? If you’re not sure about the values of someone from a different background, how might you start the conversation to learn more?

Delving deeper: Which of the three elements of Welcoming work – leadership development, public engagement, strategic communications – is most interesting to you? Why? Can you envision how you would implement one or more of these strategies in your community?



Campaign graphic from Nebraska-based Welcoming affiliate, Nebraska is Home

Chapter 2 - Local Leaders: The Foundation for Welcoming Work

- Miguel and Luci were identified early on as strong leaders for Welcoming work in Tennessee. What do you think are some common characteristics in people that take on these types of initiatives? What types of life experiences might lead someone to engage with their community in this way?

Delving deeper: What leadership qualities do you see in yourself? Describe a time when you felt supported and encouraged to be welcoming, perhaps when others around you were not.

Chapter 3 - Starting the Welcoming Conversation

- In her presentation, Catalina notes that while honest conversations are not always comfortable, it is important to discuss what's happening in our communities. When do you feel most comfortable speaking honestly to someone? What circumstances need to be in place in order for that kind of conversation to happen?
- A big step in getting to know one another is also getting to know ourselves. If you only had a couple of minutes, how would you tell *your* story to someone from another country or cultural background?

Delving deeper: In your work, who have been some of the most challenging groups or people to reach? Why do you think this is? Is it always differences in beliefs, or are there other factors that make it difficult to make meaningful connections?

Chapter 4 - Welcoming Messages: Changing the Perceptions of Immigrants

- Are issues regarding immigration or demographic change covered in your local paper or news outlets? If yes, what topics do they tend to cover? Are they negative, positive, neutral or a combination? If no, why do you think they are not covered?
- When addressing the changing ethnic makeup of Shelbyville, Superintendent Ed Gray says “We’ll adjust to it. We’re all Americans.” What do you think of this statement? How would you explain why some people would agree and others would not?

Delving deeper: What is the role of media and messages in your work? Name some situations where they can be helpful or they can be harmful. Do you think your message is being heard? Why or why not?

Chapter 5 - From Neighbors to Friends: Overcoming Common Misunderstandings

- The Thanksgiving dinner brought together many different types of people from Shelbyville. Have you ever attended a gathering like this? How did it happen? What seemed to be the most significant reason people chose to come?
- At dinner, Imam Mohamed doesn’t hold Beverly’s hand for religious reasons and Marilyn wants to know why. Have you ever been in a situation where a stark cultural or religious difference has contributed to misunderstanding or tension? What did you do or what could you have done to help create more understanding?

Delving deeper: Addressing cultural misperceptions is an important part of Welcoming work. Have you faced challenges with this? If so, what were they? How and when have you been most effective in shifting misperceptions?

For more resources, visit www.welcomingamerica.org.

Acknowledgments

Discussion Guide

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"Building a Nation of Neighbors" is part of *Shelbyville Multimedia*, a project of *Active Voice*, in association with *BeCause Foundation*. Adapted from the documentary *Welcome to Shelbyville*, directed and produced by *Kim A. Snyder*, it is designed to promote community-building and harmony between native-born Americans and immigrants and refugees nationwide. It was developed in partnership with *Welcoming America*, with generous support from *Unbound Philanthropy*.

For more *Shelbyville Multimedia* resources, including webisodes and modules, visit www.shelbyvillemultimedia.org

About *Welcome to Shelbyville*

Change has come to rural Tennessee. Set against the backdrop of a shaky economy, *Welcome to Shelbyville* takes an intimate look at a southern town as its residents – whites and African Americans, Latinos and Somalis – grapple with their beliefs, their histories and their evolving ways of life. *Welcome to Shelbyville* is directed and produced by Kim A. Snyder and executive produced by BeCause Foundation, in association with Active Voice. www.welcometoshelbyvillefilm.com

ACTIVE voice®

Active Voice uses film, television and multimedia to spark social change from grassroots to grass tops. Our team of strategic communications specialists works with mediamakers, funders, advocates and thought leaders to put a human face on the issues of our times. We frame and beta-test key messages, develop national and local partnerships, plan and execute high profile, outcome-oriented events, repurpose digital content for web and viral distribution, produce ancillary and educational resources and consult with industry and sector leaders. Since our inception in 2001, Active Voice has built a diverse portfolio of story-based campaigns focusing on issues including immigration, criminal justice, healthcare and sustainability. www.activevoice.net

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