



Welcome seasonal workers to town

June 17, 2009

Next Monday, June 22, the Seasonal Worker Program Committee will host a reception for York's summertime workers, allowing them to get to know both our town and its residents. The event will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Inn on The Blues, at 7 Ocean Ave. Everyone is invited to this free event and we encourage folks to come out and get to know these employees.

As generations of young people can tell you, working in York during the summer is often a wonderful experience. For many, this time in the town leaves a lasting impression and some — such as this writer — are fortunate enough to return to York later in life and call it home.

Seasonal workers — often waitstaff, store and hotel clerks, chambermaids and others who work in service jobs — contribute much to York's economy and are in many ways the backbone of the tourist experience. The foreign workers also offer natives the chance to learn about and meet people from different cultures. Workers expected to be at the reception hail from Bulgaria, Romania, Thailand, Asia, Jamaica, China and Central America, among other places. Event organizers hope the mixer will give workers a chance to meet locals and each other, and to forge new friendships.

To help ease the workers' transitions into American life, the committee, which is a subcommittee of the nonprofit York Diversity Program and a collaborative among volunteers, the Greater York Region Chamber of Commerce, the York Public Library and the First Parish Church, is reaching out in other ways. The group is looking for people to volunteer as English conversation partners for foreign workers and has received donations of bicycles, on loan, to serve as transportation for these employees. Last year, the committee loaned out 50 bicycles. Although Katty Johnson, the committee's co-chairman, told *The York Weekly* in May the group doesn't need any more bikes this year, the committee will gladly take monetary donations to buy replacement parts for the bikes and to support the program's social activities.

This summer, several of York's churches will host dinners for these workers. Also, the committee oversees the Seasonal Worker Friend Program, which asks local volunteers to be the "point of contact" for these employees. These friends are still needed, Nancy Gustad, the program's co-chairman said this past week.

If you plan to attend Monday night's event or have other questions or thoughts on how you can make a worker's summer stay in York more pleasant, e-mail the committee at igive@maine.rr.com.

We welcome seasonal workers to town and wish them a healthy, safe and terrific summer. We hope their stay here will enhance their lives.

— The York Weekly