

# Redmond's

# Diversity



Performer Qi Zhang sings the story of Chinese Migrations

*Redmond is quickly becoming a widely diverse community. More than 55 languages are spoken on the Eastside, with new immigrants arriving from different parts of the world daily. With this change comes exposure to a wonderful array of culturally mixed events and faiths, international cuisine and educational programs. But, the sudden change also brings challenges. Language, economic, religious, and cultural differences affect every area of communication and social interaction in our community. In response to this challenge, the City treats diversity as a central issue of concern and opportunity, and is answering with programs that foster understanding, equal employment opportunity, educational awareness, outreach to people with disabilities, language translation and culturally diverse performances and classes.*

## Educational Diversity

Effective public safety education relies on communicating a clear, common message. At the Police Department, crime prevention materials are printed in both English and Spanish. Non-public safety materials are also printed in languages selected based on the school district's report of culturally diverse populations in the schools. The Water Quality Report, for example, is printed in both Spanish and Chinese. The Police Department has Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Middle East volunteers. Each volunteer has been trained to assist in fingerprinting

children as part of the kids ID program offered by the Redmond Town Center Police and Fire Community Outreach Substation, to staff the Redmond Town Center Police and Fire Community Substation and to provide CPR and First Aid assistance. Additionally, three Spanish speaking volunteers are trained to retrieve and report on messages received from the Hispanic Phone Line (425-556-2544) and are certified by the Eastside Domestic Violence Program ([www.edvp.org](http://www.edvp.org)). Department goals also include multicultural recruiting



and hiring. Officer jobs are advertised in multiple issues of “Color” magazine, which targets all minority populations. Six officers, one dispatcher and one records specialist can communicate in Spanish. The Fire Department emergency communications center (9-1-1) also has the ability to access translators to assist with call processing/information access and to provide assistance to responders.

The City has an internal directory of employees who have fluency in languages other than English. Residents who need the help of a translator in order to better understand City services can call 425-556-2900. Languages spoken at the City include Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin, Shanghai, Singapore and other dialects), Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Philippine, Tagalog, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Telugi and Vietnamese.

At the Redmond Library, multicultural and multilingual access is also supported by the *Books to Grow On* program, featured on page 11. Lake Washington School District, also featured on page 11, pays special attention to economic, social and ethnic diversity.

### Religious Diversity

Medina Academy Muslim preschool teaches Muslim tradition in the Old Redmond Schoolhouse Community Center (ORSCC) to a school of forty students and Sunday school of sixty students. As part of their lease agreement the City and the Academy work together to provide educational programs for the entire community. During the Muslim festival of Rammadan, groups meet at ORSCC every night of the week for prayer. Family dinners are often held there at this time. The ORSCC also opens its doors to a rental group of 250 people who meet there for Jummah Prayer. This building is

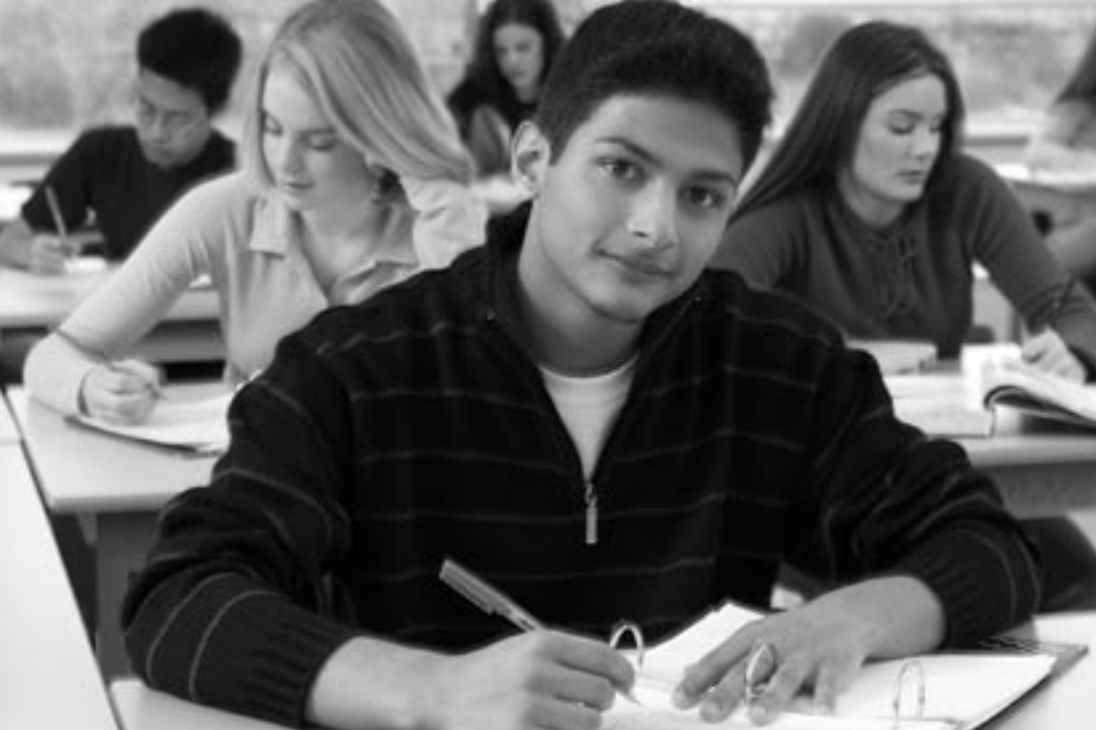
considered the group’s “mosque” since there is no actual mosque in Redmond. Chinese dances and Buddhist meetings are also held at ORSCC.

### Social Diversity

Sports bring together people of all ages and cultures. Recent upgrades of several City sports fields to artificial turf surfaces have enabled a variety of new activities, primarily among Indian, European and Hispanic populations. Specifically, sports such as Cricket, Field Hockey and (Liga Hispania) Soccer have all benefited from the renovated fields. Specialized Recreation staff is also trained to accommodate people with disabilities. “The City is experiencing a rapidly changing population which is becoming more and more diverse each day,” former Parks Director Danny Hopkins said in September, “This has resulted in the need for increased recreation opportunities, which these renovations provide.”



Costumes of India featured at the Redmond Senior Center



### Cultural Diversity in the classroom

#### Cultural Diversity

The Senior Center also has many culturally diverse programs. Bunka embroidery, sometimes called *painting with yarn*, originated in Japan in the early 1900's. Hawaiian Hula tells the folk legends of the Hawaiian people. T'ai Chi Chuan is a Chinese meditative martial art. Hatha Yoga brings stretching exercises from India. Day trips are offered to cultural events such as the Greek Festival, Suquamish Museum and Wing Luke Museum. English as a Second Language is taught by seniors and community volunteers. East Indian music, storytelling, Salsa dancing, Afro-Cuban drumming and multicultural music, theater and dance performances are also presented. Hosted by the India Association

of Western Washington, a monthly luncheon and lecture program draws approximately 80-150 East Indian citizens (and others) from our community. The program has been so well received it is now funded and sponsored by the Senior Services of Seattle-King County nutrition program.

Since January of last year, one program at the Senior Center has made a big difference in the lives of Chinese seniors. Some have arrived as immigrants, while others have children who work at Microsoft who have moved them here from China. Coordinated by the Chinese Information and Service Center in Seattle, ([www.cisc-seattle.org](http://www.cisc-seattle.org)), the Eastside Outreach Program at the Senior Center supports Chinese seniors. "It's designed for people who would not otherwise have access to the community," says Coordinator Catherine Wong, "This

program gives them the help they need."

Si Yan Zhang is a newcomer to America and to Redmond. "The Senior Center has helped me solve a lot of problems like transportation, shopping and communication," says Zhang. "When I first came here, all I thought about was how much I wanted to go home to China. I spoke no English. I missed my friends in China. Then, the program helped me learn a little English and introduced me to new friends. Now, I feel differently. American people are friendly. I'm happy to be here. I don't want to leave." Zhang says she loves the Chinese information program so much that she now volunteers her time to help other seniors. "It's helped me with my daily life a lot. What I learned here, I could not have done alone."

Da Chun Ling, who teaches calligraphy through the

program, has been in Redmond since 1996. "Before I came to the United States, all of my Chinese friends said "America is a paradise for children, but if you are old, it's a graveyard. Now I know that's not true—it's a paradise for both children and the elderly. It's good to live here as a senior." Yuehui Lu, who has only been here two months, agrees, "I believe life is better here for seniors than it is in China." Nine years ago, Ling was the only person enrolled in the program. Since then, he says, the Chinese community has grown significantly. "With the new growth, this program is especially important," says Ling, "It's a vital way for Chinese elders to share their daily life and be a part of the community."

*"When we embrace each others' differences," says Mayor Rosemarie Ives, "together, we really do become a diverse community of good neighbors."*

The Old Redmond Firehouse Teen Center presents a variety of cultural activities, including lecture and slide show travel presentations and ethnic food cooking classes and demonstrations. "Diversity speaks to how we are, from the color of our skin to the beliefs and values that

we hold as a person,” says Ken Wong, Director of the Teen Center. “This can include religious beliefs based on a nationality to sexual orientation. So, the atmosphere we try to create at the Firehouse is open to all cultures, beliefs and orientations. With these principles in mind, we offer programs that allow teens to explore, learn, or taste things that maybe different from what they are use to. This can range from an East Indian nutrition class to a discussion group on beliefs, values and traditions that we come with as a family, culture or ethnic background. We feel that this is important because creating awareness creates better understanding. We do not always have to accept these ideals but we should come from a place of understanding. As we say, you can agree to disagree but always be able to hear the other side and, at the Firehouse, you can sometimes even taste it.”

Redmond Arts Commission is equally dedicated to providing a variety of multi-cultural events and performances in the community. Both the “Arts in the Parks” summer concerts and the “Winter Performance Series” offer a wide variety of culturally diverse programs. This year’s summer concerts showcased African, Middle Eastern, East Indian, Native American, Brazilian, Scandinavian, Afro-Cuban, and West

African instrumental, vocal and dance performances. This winter, in celebration and recognition of Chinese New Years, the Arts Commission Winter Performance Series will include the Chinese Pacific Performing Arts Center (PPAC), Authentic Chinese Cultural Showcase, January 28, 2006, 7:00 pm. All proceeds go to support the Well Pacific Cancer Foundation. Information is available at 425-556-2316. The performance will explore a variety of diverse Chinese traditions.

“China’s history tells the story of an immense land with several diverse tribes,” says PPAC lead singer Qi Zhang, “It is also one of migrations and conflict, and separation and fusion of cultures. The Han people were a product of the intermingling of many tribes. In Authentic Chinese Cultural Showcase, we will present traditional

performances from these tribes.” Zhang says the performance will be the first of its kind in this area, bringing talented, semi-professional performers to the stage to present classical Chinese Opera, regional folk music, dance, traditional instruments and martial arts.

“The diversity of the performance will appeal to all ages,” said Well Pacific Cancer Foundation Director of Development Kurt Frenter, “Audiences will like the variety as well as the visual treat of seeing distinctive, authentic costumes. The show will be a Chinese Cultural Arts Dim Sum; a small taste of the richness and mystique of China presented in a very accessible way.” For specific program information, see the Winter Performance Series ad on the inside front cover.

An award-winning example of the City’s dedication to supporting diversity in

our community is the RedmondLights month-long celebration of diverse traditions, cultures and faiths, held during the winter holiday season. The event’s attention to diversity actually garnered it a 2002 Program of Excellence award from the Washington Recreation and Parks Association and 2004 Diversity Champion Award from the Association of Washington Cities. RedmondLights’ kickoff and subsequent festivities highlighting culturally diverse food, entertainment and events will be held Sunday, December 4, 4-8 pm at City Hall. Los Santos Reyes Fiesta, one of many special RedmondLights programs, will feature mariachi bands, food and puppetry on January 7, 5 pm at Redmond High School. (See RedmondLights insert.)

The Chinese Luncheon at the Redmond Senior Center brings friends together.

