



OneMorgan County

“Uniting Cultures to Celebrate the Mosaic of our Community”

April 2009 Progress Report: A Culmination of the First 4 Years

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OneMorgan County Organizational Structure

Oversight

OneMorgan County (OMC) has been guided by an Advisory Council during its first four years. OMC's fiscal agent has been Morgan Community College (MCC). MCC has provided supervisory services for OMC's coordinator. OMC's projects and spending have been guided by the fiscal rules and regulations of MCC.

In October 2008 a Transition Team of community volunteers was formed to guide OMC through its final year and to determine the best possible route to sustainability. After considering different options, this team voted to pursue non-profit status. The Founding Board Members have been identified and include volunteers from many different sectors. This new Board will provide oversight for OMC as a new non-profit. OMC has an impressive group of volunteers who are dedicated to the organization becoming a permanent addition to the community's network of services.

OneMorgan County Employee

Brenda Zion, Coordinator. OMC has one employee—a full-time coordinator. Brenda holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Northern Colorado and is enrolled in Regis University's Master of Science in Organization Leadership with a Specialization in Project Leadership and Management program. Brenda is working towards achieving her Colorado Literacy Instruction Authorization and her Board of Immigration Appeals Accreditation. Brenda was raised in Morgan County and believes that everyone benefits from cohesive communities.

OneMorgan County Founding Board Members

Karen Temple, Chair. Karen has a very diverse background in sales and marketing, public relations, web design, desk-top publishing, fund-raising, grant writing, and video production in a variety of fields such as healthcare, Fortune 500 business, banking, and entrepreneurship. She has an Associate of Arts degree from MCC. She is currently employed with the Morgan County School District as well as self-employed as a Mary Kay Sales Director. Karen believes a strong and vibrant community is made up of people from diverse nationalities each bringing a unique set of talents and perspective. She believes OMC can be a catalyst to help weave those differences into a rich tapestry of life and small town living, creating a community she is proud to call home.

Mary Gross, Vice-Chair. Mary has a Bachelor of Arts in Adult Education and an Associate of Applied Science in Electronics. Mary is the Executive Director of the Morgan County Family Center. Mary has worked with family support, parent and adult education for 15 years. Mary believes that OMC is important to the community as it adds another level of education and support for not only immigrants and refugees but for the whole community.

Trish Moreno, Secretary/Treasurer. Trish is the Executive Director of the Fort Morgan Area Chamber of Commerce. She has completed MCC's Adult Education Certification Program,

Leadership Morgan County, MCC's website design program and MCC's General Associate Program with a Business Emphasis.

Sandra Baker, Board Member. Sandra is the Director of Northeast Colorado Area Agency on Aging and has held that position for the last 19 years. She has worked for the Northeast Colorado Association of Local Governments for the last 30 years. Sandra has lived in Morgan County all her life and is invested in promoting Morgan County.

Damaris Cooksey, Board Member. Damaris has a Bachelor of Science in Small Business Management from the University of Northern Colorado. She has worked in the insurance, construction, mortgage and agricultural industries. She is committed to the principles of OMC and to the education of immigrants and receiving communities.

Don Coloroso, Board Member. Don is the Coordinator of Federal Programs for the Centennial Board of Cooperative Education Services. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Social Studies and a Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling. Don had acted as a Disability Coordinator (Adams County Head Start), Director of Social Studies (Envision), Chief Executive Officer (kids are worth it! Inc.) and Executive Director (Boulder County Board for Developmental Disabilities). Don's purpose in serving on the Board of Directors of OMC is assisting its commitment to community integration of all of its members. Don is a believer in the potential of all human beings, and each person's inherent gifts to give and receive from the community.

John Crosthwait, Board Member. John's family has been Morgan County landowners and residents since the late 1800's. They still own and reside on the same farm that their immigrant great-grandfather homesteaded and purchased. They have been involved in water rights, cash crop and livestock production for well over 100 years. John is presently the Director of Northeast Colorado Health Department that serves and has an office in Fort Morgan. Prior to that John was a Morgan County Commissioner from 1993-2004. John has been the active owner and operator of his family's farm for over 30 years. His undergraduate degree was

earned from Colorado State University with a major in economics. He graduated from Brush High School, and attended elementary school in Hillrose, Colorado. John's support of OMC has been solid since its inception. He believes that there exists many elements of success that will not only bolster the support within the community, but work as a valuable collaborative partner to service agencies that provide support and assistance to immigrant populations. He also believes that OMC provides inclusive services to immigrants regardless of their origin, and works toward the goal of inclusion in our communities. John is proud to be a part of OMC and support the mission, vision and goals.

Tim Edgar, Board Member. Tim is the Center Director for the Fort Morgan Small Business Development Center serving all of Northeastern Colorado and soon to be the Director of Development for MCC. Tim has a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Regis, and three undergrad degrees from Northeastern Junior College – business, general studies, and flight crew management. Tim has been in two businesses of his own, is about to start a third, and is currently helping businesses from around the region start, maintain, and grow their businesses. He spent six years in the non-profit world as the executive director of the Logan County Chamber of Commerce in Sterling, Colorado and also is actively involved in a regional tourism effort. He was the co-chair of the Relay for Life of Logan County for three of the five years that he served on that committee. Tim is very interested in business, and in Northeastern Colorado. He chooses to raise his daughters here, and looks for every way to help keep rural life a way of life – for all who choose to make this area “home.”

Esthela Nunez, Board Member. Esthela is the Workers Compensation Coordinator at Cargill Meat Solutions in Fort Morgan, Colorado. She has a Bachelors' degree in Business Administration/Finance. She came to this country when she was a freshman in high school. She did not speak English and she did not have ESL or organizations such as OMC. She believes it is great to have a community resource such as OMC to help immigrants. She knows what it is like for newcomers, but knowing that there is an agency that can help, support, and guide families makes it better.

Darin Sagel, Board Member. Darin is a Lieutenant with the Fort Morgan Police Department. His educational background includes graduating from Fort Morgan High School and attending approximately 2.5 years of college. He received a training certificate in law enforcement. Darin has always felt that OMC is a needed organization within the community. Morgan County has a very diverse population and OMC assists the community to integrate and understand the different cultures that immigrants bring to the community. He believes OMC has been a great asset to the Fort Morgan Police Department and the City of Fort Morgan.

Greg Wagers, Board Member. Greg is Superintendent of Schools for Morgan County School District RE-3. He has a Bachelor of Science in Social Science, Master of Arts in Middle School Education, and a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership. Greg has worked in the Re-3 School District since 1984 holding the positions of classroom teacher, Testing Specialist, Curriculum Director, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and Superintendent of Schools. Greg was involved very early in the OMC initiative and has been a long-time member of the Advisory Council. His perspective, as a school administrator, has given him an opportunity to have a positive impact on the evolution of OMC as well as an opportunity to leverage district and OMC resources to provide increasingly effective educational services to immigrant/refugee students and their families. The school district, in particular, and community, as a whole, has benefited from the OMC initiative. As Superintendent of Schools, Greg remains fully supportive of OMC and appreciates the wide-range of services it provides.

Julie Waters, Board Member. Julie has a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, with Masters Education in Special Education; Educational Equity and Cultural Diversity; English as a Second Language; and Educational Management. Julie has directed the Adult Education program for 13 years and has provided supervision for the OMC Coordinators since the inception of the program. Julie believes OMC provides opportunities for building relationships across cultures which creates a welcoming community.

OneMorgan County Mission

OneMorgan County facilitates, educates, unites and collaborates with diverse people and organizations to appreciate the mosaic of our community and strengthen the inclusive nature of our community.

OneMorgan County Vision

OneMorgan County embraces our cultures to foster cohesive, diverse, and unique communities while celebrating our similarities and differences.

OneMorgan County Principles

- OneMorgan County upholds the basic principles upon which the United States of America was founded establishing equality for all people.
- OneMorgan County fosters a positive experience of integration for immigrants, refugees and the entire community.
- OneMorgan County promotes the shared responsibility to act with integrity and treat all of our neighbors with respect, decency and dignity.
- OneMorgan County embraces education as a tool to enhance multi-cultural awareness and appreciation.
- OneMorgan County dedicates itself to being responsive to the changing cultural needs of the entire community.
- OneMorgan County educates newcomers about local customs and laws and encourages them to become effectively engaged in this community.

OneMorgan County Community Information and History

OMC is a community integration initiative serving the residents of Morgan County, Colorado-- a rural agricultural county in northeastern Colorado with a population of approximately 29,300 people. Morgan County, Colorado was formed in 1889 from part of Weld County. The county seat is in Fort Morgan and other cities and towns include Brush, Wiggins, Log Lane Village, Snyder, Hillrose and Weldona. Morgan County is primarily a rural entity located on the high

plains of northeastern Colorado, with Weld and Logan Counties to the north, Washington County to the east, Adams County to the south and Weld County to the west. Measuring 36 miles long and 36 miles wide, the county encompasses 1,296 square miles. Morgan County is 36th among Colorado counties measured in square-miles. It includes many irrigated and dry land farms as well as beef, sheep and dairy ranches.

OMC acknowledges the history of immigration in the area. Morgan County has a rich and diverse history with settlers from all over the world calling it home. In 1884, Fort Morgan was settled as an off-shoot of the Union Colony and its English and Canadian settlers. Following the silver crash of 1893, Italian miners from Silver Plume, Colorado became farmers in Weldona. Brush was started as a cattle town. With the support of land companies and the Homestead Act, Danes and Norwegians were recruited to call Morgan County home in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Between 1905 and 1925 the sugar beet industry enticed German Russians to come to the Morgan County area. They worked as laborers to grow and harvest the cash crop. In the 1920s German Russians started to buy farm land and needed laborers so recruited Hispanics from New Mexico and Texas. Between 1930 and 1960 Mexican laborers were brought to the area through the Bracero program to work. During World War II, the Governor of Colorado invited Japanese ousted from California to relocate here. In the mid 1960s, American Beef built a beef-packing plant which later became Sterling Beef, then Excel Beef Corporation and now Cargill Meat Solutions. The beef-packing plant has ushered in many different immigrant populations to Morgan County for work that is labor intensive, requires minimal English skills and pays a relatively good wage plus benefits. These immigrant populations have come from all over the world including Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and more.

Morgan County experiences both transient immigrant populations and those who choose to stay for multiple generations. Over the years different immigrant populations have experienced different acts of discrimination and abuse. OMC recognizes the changing cultural

environment of our county. We strive to embrace and grow with those changes and thereby foster a different reality for newcomers now and in the future.

OneMorgan County in Action

OMC began to take shape in 2005 through the collective efforts of Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education staff and additional community members. These volunteers helped to form sub-committees in critical focus areas including education, law enforcement, healthcare, business, housing, and community and culture. While those committees have since been dissolved they have had a lasting influence on the substance of the organization. Our community established and defined OMC! Over the last several years, OMC has continued to form valuable partnerships with organizations and agencies both local and statewide that have significantly strengthened the program and its outreach.

OMC has succeeded in many areas by bringing to the community a new idea of what community integration might look like. OMC provides:

- *Workshops.* Workshops are an opportunity to share information with community members about how and where to access services in critical areas including law enforcement, employment, business, housing, education, healthcare, and more. OMC works to remove language as a barrier to connecting immigrants and refugees with services and fosters trust between immigrants and refugees and service providers. Workshops are made accessible to immigrants and refugees by having the presented information interpreted into Spanish and other languages as needed. These workshops have been co-sponsored by participating agencies including but not limited to the Fort Morgan Police Department, Small Business Development Center, Colorado Workforce Center, Morgan Community College Agriculture and Business Management program, Colorado State University Extension Office, and more. OMC is working to supplement these workshops with a pamphlet series that highlights critical community information.
- *Connectivity with the Community.* Connectivity with the community is achieved through an updated contact list. OMC disseminates important information to stakeholders—

immigrants, refugees and receiving community members. Communication includes sharing information regarding workshops, events, activities, and programs via email, mail, flyers, pamphlets and word-of-mouth. OMC receives feedback from the entire community via representation on organizations' boards, through word-of-mouth, through input from its own diverse Board, through its partnership with Morgan Community College's Adult Basic Education program and through event evaluation mechanisms.

- *Information sharing.* Information sharing provides an opportunity for OMC to interact with community members. Information sharing is provided as needed and is responsive to the needs of the community. Some examples include:
 - OMC partnered with Lutheran Family Services and Morgan County School District RE-3 to host a town hall meeting on the Somali culture. The meeting was meant to be a proactive approach to introducing receiving community members to some of Morgan County's newest neighbors.
 - Upon request, OMC meets with clubs and organization to talk about OMC and share immigrant and refugee information.
 - OMC was established as a phase-one grantee of The Colorado Trust's Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative (SIRFI). The Colorado Trust has funded nineteen grantees across Colorado over two phases. Each grantee has taken on its own identity, substance and name. When a new SIRFI grantee started in Greeley, Colorado as part of SIRFI's second phase, OMC provided examples of OMC's projects in order to share and help that program's steering committee to imagine the possibilities as they strategized on how they would pursue and define their initiative.
- *International Music Fest.* OMC sponsors and organizes an annual International Music Fest. The music fest is an opportunity for attendees to experience music and food from across the world and to celebrate diversity. The music fest is co-sponsored by participating agencies including but not limited to the City of Brush, Brush Area

Chamber of Commerce, Fort Morgan Area Chamber of Commerce, B106 radio, Morgan County Area Arts Council, and more.

- *Health Navigators Luncheons.* These meetings have been co-sponsored by OneMorgan County, Rural Solutions, Morgan County Family Center and Rural Communities Resource Center. Speakers from across the state share information about different health programs, topics and resources. These meetings are meant to connect service providers with the best tools and most up-to-date information regarding healthcare resources in the area.
- *Facilitation of Meetings/Dialogue.* OMC provides opportunities for immigrant, refugee and receiving community members to build and maintain a productive dialogue. OMC provides these opportunities through Coffee & Culture meetings and luncheons. These opportunities break down barriers, connect people, and build relationships. One special example took place last fall. Community members were invited to come to a luncheon and meet the local Somali Elders. OMC partnered with United Methodist Church of Fort Morgan to provide a meal with African, Mexican and American food. OMC facilitated the discussion including recognition of the community's efforts toward integration and encouraged the efforts to continue. The Somali Elders introduced themselves and answered questions from the crowd of approximately 70 people. In a notably profound moment everyone, religious devotees of various backgrounds, prayed together.
- *Problem Solving.* OMC is engaged in helping to address complex issues stemming from immigration and refugee resettlement. Some examples are:
 - OMC partnered with Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education to initiate a parent support group for immigrant and refugee parents. The group continues today and is called Padres Triunfadores (Successful Parents). It is meant to be a resource for parenting information, parenting strategies, coping mechanisms, and recognition of successes. OMC has contracted with an adult education instructor to provide a facilitator for this group. The facilitator also provides liaison support between immigrant and refugee parents and the local school districts.

- In summer 2008, Don Heer, owner and operator of Heer Mortuary, contacted OMC and asked for assistance with developing a plan for providing funeral services for the Somali refugees in Fort Morgan. OMC was able to organize and facilitate a conversation between Mr. Heer and local Somali Elders that resulted in a tentative plan in the event of a death of a Somali refugee. Mr. Heer has the only mortuary service in Morgan County and wanted to be prepared and sensitive to the cultural traditions of the Somali Muslim refugees. Based on the content of the conversation and the assumptions and questions that were revealed, this meeting was a proactive step in reducing misunderstandings and confusion.
- OMC participated in a brainstorming session with staff from Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education, Morgan County School District and the Spring Institute of Intercultural Learning to address the dynamic challenges facing the school district and greater community as immigrants and African refugees resettle here. This brainstorming session resulted, in part, in a training for school district staff that was provided by the Spring Institute.
- OMC has been involved in helping Morgan County School District RE-3 to build a relationship with the Somali refugee community. OMC has been participating in regular meetings that bring together school administration and local Somali Elders. These meetings have taken place at different schools within the district. RE-3 administrators have been able to emphasize school expectations and Somali Elders have been able to share obstacles. These meetings have exemplified the notion of give and take.
- OMC was approached by the Morgan County Department of Human Services to help organize a meeting between Human Services staff and the Somali Elders. OMC was able to help organize a meeting and conversation around child protection practices, expectations and regulations in Morgan County.

- *Flexibility and Availability.* Flexibility and availability are key to OMC's success and relevancy and has helped OMC to become involved in numerous partnerships. For example:
 - OMC was invited to support and participate in a Women to Women group wherein local women volunteer to mentor African refugee women. OMC has been asked to help to guide and organize the initiative. The group has been made possible through the support of the Fort Morgan Public Library and a group of local volunteers that include retired school teachers, active community leaders, library staff, and more. The hope is that this interest and enthusiasm will eventually benefit all immigrants in Morgan County. The work of Morgan County Family Center is adding a layer of support as it strives to develop a family mentoring project that will help to support the Women to Women volunteers and other volunteers across our community.
 - OMC has partnered with Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education to offer Spanish GED instruction to students who are active participants in English as a Second Language classes so as to advance the participants' education *while* versus *after* the English learning has taken place.
 - OMC was approached by the City of Brush's City Administrator to help to organize a Morgan County Cinco de Mayo Celebration. OMC was able to help organize the event and to solicit volunteers and sponsors. Partners for this event include Cargill Meat Solutions, the City of Brush, the City of Fort Morgan, Morgan County Government, Brush Area Chamber of Commerce, Fort Morgan Area Chamber of Commerce, KFTM/KSIR radio, the Fort Morgan Times, and more.
 - OMC has been approached to partner with the Fort Morgan Public Library to continue to sponsor computer classes for adult English Language Learners. OMC will be partnering with the library, Morgan County Family Center and the Jared Polis Foundation to offer the classes and provide refurbished computers for the participants.

- OMC was approached by Fort Morgan High School to help sponsor a group of high school youth who were English Language Learners participating in a Close Up for New Americans trip to Washington D.C. OMC was able to support the group who participated in an intense introduction to the U.S. Government.
- OMC was approached by Centennial Board of Cooperative Education Services to support the Migrant Education program. OMC partnered with Morgan County Family Center to provide 200 backpacks with school supplies to school children of migrant families.
- OMC is participating in Morgan County School District RE-3's Parent and Community Involvement Committee. This is a valuable opportunity for OMC to nurture the increased involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the education of their children. Other participants include Centennial BOCES, Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education, Morgan County Department of Human Services, immigrant parents of school district students, Parent Teacher Organization volunteers, Morgan County Family Center and more.
- OMC was approached by Christ Congregation Church's pastor to partner with the Morgan Area Ministerial Alliance to organize a project called Labor for Your Neighbor—a community clean-up project and block party. OMC partnered with Colorado State Extension Office to support this outreach initiative.
- OMC has partnered with Rural Solutions, Colorado State University Extension Office and Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education to provide nutrition class for immigrants and refugees.
- OMC responded to the suggestions of its Advisory Council members at a July 2008 retreat and offered citizenship classes. OMC partnered with Morgan Community College Adult Basic Education, the Law Office of Sherry Lin of Denver, and the Law Office of Lisa Martin Pray of Denver to offer professional consultations for citizenship students and additional community members.
- OMC was approached to help support and encourage adult English Language Learners' participation in a pronunciation class at Morgan Community College.

OMC was able to provide scholarships to assist with tuition costs. OMC partnered with Morgan Community College, the college's Adult Basic Education program and the college's Workplace Education program housed at Cargill Meat Solutions to assist the ELL students with navigating enrollment and affording the cost.

- *Organization and Support for Volunteers.* OMC's success requires the dedication of volunteers. OMC is working with Morgan County Family Center and leaders from many local organizations to develop a volunteer training and support program.
- *Creativity.* OMC aims to lead by example, introduce new approaches to integration, encourage a new philosophy and offer tangible opportunities to enact new methods and new attitudes.
 - OMC coordinated an immersion trip to Mexico. This trip was April 19-26, 2009 and was a new project for OMC. The trip was introduced as an effort to promote multicultural appreciation and to further the understanding of the challenges facing those who leave their country of origin in order to relocate as an immigrant, refugee or asylum seeker and thereby immerse themselves in a foreign language and environment.
 - OMC provided \$250 worth of multi-cultural books to Morgan County school libraries.
 - OMC provided Morgan Community College's Adult Basic Education with flags that represent the countries of origin of its students.
 - OMC is working to provide the first annual OMC Multicultural Appreciation Scholarship for a Morgan County graduating senior.
 - OMC partnered with the Fort Morgan Public Library to host a documentary viewing and discussion series featuring immigrant and refugee related material and topics.
 - OMC has partnered with the Fort Morgan Times to publish a monthly article called "Who is Your Neighbor" that profiles an immigrant or refugee living in Morgan County.

OneMorgan County Budget

OMC is in a transition year. MCC has acted as OMC's fiscal agent since its inception and has housed and incubated the initiative. This partnership has enabled OMC to grow into a sustainable organization. OMC's budget for this fiscal year (July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009) is \$107,961.00. OMC is expected to receive in-kind support that has been projected to total \$47,735.00 for a grand total of \$155,696.00. Financial support from The Colorado Trust has been extended and will expire on December 31, 2009. On January 1, 2010, a new phase of OMC will begin. Planning for this transition is ramping-up and is moving forward with the launching of OMC's sponsorship campaign on May 30th at the International Music Fest at the Morgan County Fairgrounds from 11:00-5:00. MCC has become the first organization to sponsor OMC by pledging its support of a substantial piece of OMC's budget including rent, utilities, and IT assistance.

This is an exciting time for OMC as it steps out from underneath the umbrella of The Colorado Trust, the Spring Institute and MCC and transitions into a new era as a non-profit with diversified financial support of earned revenue, grants, individual sponsorship, business sponsorship and in-kind donations. OMC is going to be a permanent addition to the Morgan County community. OMC will continue to be exemplary because it is dedicated to building partnerships, to listening to feedback and to being responsive to the changing needs of Morgan County.

Conclusion of Accomplishments and Current State

OMC is an immigrant and refugee integration initiative that believes that integration is a two-way process of helping established and newly arrived residents work together for a stronger community where everyone feels a sense of belonging. The program helps immigrants and refugees to become productive and engaged members of the community through presentations, workshops, trainings and resource referral. Simultaneously, the program helps members of the receiving community better understand their new neighbors by offering

community presentations, meetings, cultural festivals, and other resources. OMC minimizes some of the challenges faced by other community agencies, businesses and government entities so that those entities can deliver their goods and services more efficiently.

OMC recognizes the value of building a sense of acceptance and belonging among people based on trust, shared values, and common experiences. This in turn helps bridge social, cultural and linguistic differences within our community. OMC's two-way approach helps immigrants adapt and learn about their rights, opportunities and responsibilities as community residents while also sensitizing established residents to the diversity of cultures in our community and how that strengthens us. To these ends, OMC is a partnership of long-time residents, immigrants, community leaders and representatives from education, business, faith-based organizations, health care, law enforcement, local government, and nonprofit agencies working together to promote and provide a positive integration experience, both for immigrants *and* for our community.

Written April 2009 by Brenda Zion, Coordinator for OneMorgan County.