

Guest column: TedX works toward cultural understanding

The greatest benefit for me to working with groups like TEDxCincinnati is the inspiration that is passed along by people who are truly passionate about affecting change.

For the past several weeks I've been part of the TEDxCincinnati leadership team, working to bring people together for an Oct. 4 "Every Citizen a Diplomat."

Sponsored by Cincinnati USA Sister Cities and Sister Cities International, TEDxCincinnati will bring thought provoking ideas to life at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center with speakers and performers. They'll share personal stories and talk about the power within each of us to bridge cultural understanding and cooperation, and to build and strengthen relationships in our own communities, our country and around the world.

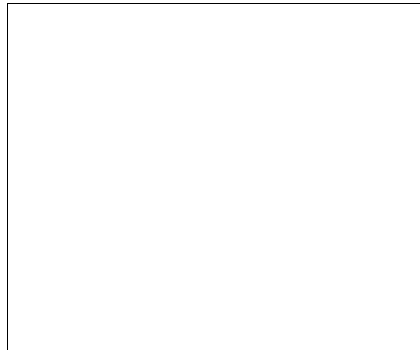
Our ultimate goal? We want to spark energy, conversation and action. We want to build on Greater Cincinnati's momentum that we've already demonstrated this summer of embracing diverse cultures with openness and appreciation.

When Bob Herring, principal of Nativity School in Pleasant Ridge, told me he believes that in order to move forward, we must begin with the kids in elementary school I could hear his conviction in his voice. He has facilitated 42 student exchanges with 24 school in 18 countries since joining the School in 1984; and the School has been involved with the international 'Friendship Project' much longer. Right now actually his school is hosting students from Hungary.

"If we could bring the young people of the world together, they could form those friendships and relationships that would lead to a future we all want. They would learn that stereotypes that they held about other nations and cultures, other traditions and languages were really not true," he had told the St. Anthony Messenger.

I learned this firsthand when, as an 11-year-old, I was involved with Children's International Summer Village. It really didn't seem to matter when I didn't use the same words to communicate with others from

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countries I had only seen on a map. The language of smiles and laughter, tears and hugs, hopes and dreams...those are universal.

When people of different cultures, races, religions, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds come together with openness and cooperation it is a beautiful thing. When all of us not just accept but appreciate how diversity strengthens us and strengthens our community, then we all benefit.

I invite you to join us. It is going to be a powerful night. To register, please visit www.TEDxCincinnati.com.

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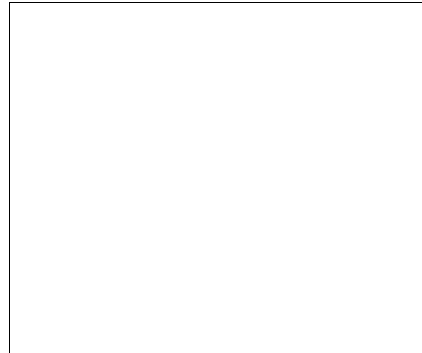
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