HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
A CUP OF CONVERSATION
The Living Room at Your Library

Public Library Association Conference 2018
Virtual conference March 22, 2018

Linking YOU to the World
www.houstonlibrary.org
WHO WE ARE

Helen Chou
Senior Manager
International Services

Carmen Peña Abrego
Assistant Manager
Library Events & Community Programs
The Living Room
at Houston Public Library

Neighbors meeting neighbors, over coffee and tea. Your library as your community’s Living Room.
The Community We Serve
HOUSTON
The International City

- Global science- and math-based industries
- 1 in 4 Houstonians is foreign-born
- Houston is BIG
- Communities stay in silos
- A state that is a national border
- Directly affected by national immigration policy
- Houston is the top destination for Central American children
The Most Diverse City in the United States

1 in 4 Houstonians are foreign-born, A 60% increase since 2000, twice the national rate.

Diversity that is the Future of America

Houston’s diversity today reflects what the U.S. will look like in 25 years

42% Hispanic, 31% non-Hispanic white, 20% African-American, 7% Asian.

HOUSTON
The International City

A Welcoming City

If Houston were a country, it would rank 4th in the world for refugee resettlement.

Houston always has been, and always will be, a Welcoming City.

- Mayor Sylvester Turner

Sources: Rice University – The Kinder Institute; City of Houston Planning Department, 2016; Mayor’s Press Conference, Dec 6, 2016; Houston Chronicle, Sept 13, 2015.
The Living Room
at Houston Public Library
The Living Room at Your Library
A Strategic Platform
The Living Room at Your Library

A Strategic Platform

Living Rooms across the City, all with 3 Components
1. Theme: Lead community on a topic or issue
2. Community discussion
3. Coffee & Tea, food & desserts (Featuring local vendors and/or international foods)

Long Term Outcome
To build social cohesion, and establish the Library as the gathering place for local neighborhoods.

Intermediate Outcomes
- Community Ownership
- Enhanced understanding of Houston’s diversity
An Opportunity to Bridge across Boundaries

Speed-Friending!
Language Exchange at Jungman Neighborhood Library

Alief Community Welcomes Refugees at Henington-Alief Regional Library
An Opportunity to Engage Current Issues

Houston’s Refugee Voices at Looscan Neighborhood Library

Star Restaurateur & Vietnamese Refugee at Henington-Alief Regional Library
An Opportunity to Have Fun!

Family Game Day at Stimley-Blue Ridge Neighborhood Library
An Opportunity to Be Amazed

East Asia at Jungman Neighborhood Library
An Opportunity to Bridge Cultures

Lunar New Year at Walter Neighborhood Library
An Opportunity to Bridge Cultures

Hispanic Heritage Month
An Opportunity to Eat!

Syria, Mexico, Cuba, Vietnam, Jamaica, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Honduras, ‘The South’, China, El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala, India…
An Opportunity to Develop and Bond Library Staff

Cultural Exchange and Exposure

Staff bonding across the branch – working together to engage the community

Leadership opportunities for emerging leaders
An Opportunity to Engage Volunteers
1 Year Soft Launch

- 20 Events
- 15 Themes
- Food from 15 countries
- 14 Locations
- 80% Repeat in 1 year
- 1 Year
- 14 neighborhoods
- 40 community partners & local businesses
- Average 100 attendees per event

84% attendance increase from 1st 6 months to 2nd 6 months
The Living Room
African-American History Month
Looking ahead:
From Cultural Celebration to Community Action

- Safety in the Neighborhood
- Hurricane Harvey Memories
- Community Emergency Response Teams
- Women’s History Month
- Go Vote 2018
The Living Room at Your Library

A TOOL to...
- Know Your Community
- Build Partnerships
- Develop and Bond Staff
- Engage Volunteers
- Demonstrate inclusive community
- Partner & support local business and organizations
Helen Chou  
Senior Manager of International Services  
helen.chou@houstontx.gov

Carmen Peña Abrego  
Assistant Manager, Library Events & Community Programs  
carmen.abrego@houstontx.gov