



Pittsburgh hosts global conference, rolls out Hola Pittsburgh!

June 16, 2014

By Deb Smit



Pittsburgh is rolling out the welcome mat to immigrants in the region through several initiatives designed to make the region a more inviting place for international newcomers.

On June 16, a partnership of Pittsburgh organizations announced [¡Hola Pittsburgh!](#), a year-long initiative designed to attract talent to the region, with an emphasis on professionals relocating from Puerto Rico.

The program will kick off the weekend of June 21-22 with a performance by the legendary salsa band, El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, as part of the Pittsburgh JazzLive International Festival presented by Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. And that's just the beginning.

Last week 200 leaders from the upper Midwest and Northeast regions gathered in Pittsburgh to put their heads together on immigrant-related economic initiatives at the [Global Great Lakes Network's](#) second annual convening.

During the conference, Senator Jim Ferlo introduced legislation to create an Office of New Americans in Pennsylvania to attract and retain new American talent. The proposed legislation will help to ensure Pennsylvania's long-term economic competitiveness in the global market.

And more. Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald launched “welcoming initiatives” as part of Welcoming America, a national grassroots collaborative aimed at promoting mutual respect and cooperation among foreign- and U.S.-born Americans.

The initiatives and events are all about promoting diversity and inclusion in the region, while reminding ourselves that the region was founded and created a century ago through the entrepreneurial integrity of its immigrants.

¡Hola Pittsburgh! is a great first step, says Melanie Harrington, president and CEO of Vibrant Pittsburgh, a nonprofit focused on increasing diversity in the region.

“The Latino community has a foothold here, and there’s plenty of room for it to grow. Our objective was to address the uncharacteristically low Latino population rates in the region with a Latino talent attraction initiative that was coupled with a welcoming strategy,” Harrington adds.

The excitement surrounding El Gran Combo, one of the best known Salsa bands in the world, is sure to attract a large out-of-town crowd and the perfect opportunity to promote Pittsburgh to the world, she says.