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All are invited to Glencoe Welcoming Week events

Glencoe community members can look forward to sharing coffee, roasting marshmallows, reading books and crafting together as part of this year's local Welcoming Week celebrations that kick off Sept. 13. All events are free and open to the public, hosted by Together we are Glencoe in an effort to build belonging among neighbors and build bridges across differences.

The week is official thanks to mayor Ryan Voss. At the August Glencoe City Council meeting, Voss issued a proclamation declaring Sept. 13-22 "Together we are Glencoe Welcoming Week" and describing Glencoe as a community that "values the fresh perspectives and ideas contributed by people of diverse backgrounds and experiences and is committed to providing a welcoming environment in which all residents have opportunities to strive, grow, and succeed."

Glencoe's Welcoming Week activities begin Sept. 13 with community coffee at Rhema from 7 to 9 a.m. Drinks are free while supplies last at this open house, which will include a community art project created by those who stop in.

On Sept 17, the 9:30 a.m. story hour at Glencoe Public Library will feature special children's books focused on welcoming and belonging.

Also on Sept. 17, Coborn's is hosting a Lotería craft party with s'mores. Visitors get to create their own Lotería board and roast marshmallows at this family friendly event. Lotería is a traditional Mexican board game of chance, similar to bingo, and is played with a deck of cards featuring illustrations in place of numbers.

Glencoe Coborn's store director Yodee Rivera is part of the Together we are Glencoe committee and helped plan this year's events.

"I chose to join Together we are Glencoe because I believe it's important for all residents to feel like they are welcomed and that they belong to a community that values unity and collaboration," said Rivera, who is also in her first year as a new Glencoe city councilor.

Local Welcoming Week events are part of a larger international movement. Launched in 2012 by Welcoming America and its members, Welcoming Week provides individuals and communities the opportunity to proclaim welcoming values through events and local initiatives that foster mutual understanding between immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as deeper belonging for all.

Kerry Ward is the chairperson for Together we are Glencoe. Ward is a lifelong resident of Glencoe and works full-time as a health educator for McLeod County Health and Human Services. With three decades in public health, she's seen firsthand how changing demographics and social structure have created challenges to connection and wellbeing in rural areas, making the work of welcoming very relevant.

"In order for us to thrive as a community, we need everyone's talent and ideas and participation. But people aren't going to join in if they don't feel welcome. Welcoming Week events are a part of building that inclusion and saying, 'There's space for you. We want you here,'" Ward said.

This is the fourth year of celebrating Welcoming Week in Glencoe. In the past two years organizers have tried to expand their efforts beyond the week in September. In 2023, Together we are Glencoe hosted a spring Unity Fest. And this year, the group launched a community garden and hosted Lotería at Glencoe Days with funding from Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services.

"Building a welcoming community means showing up, learning, and connecting all year long. We encourage you to attend local events, explore different cultures and make an effort to get to know your neighbors. Every small step counts in making Glencoe a more inclusive place," Ward said.

Welcoming Week is supported locally by Coborn's, Glencoe Public Library, Larry Anderson State Farm Insurance, Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services and community residents' contributions.

Hutchinson-based Southwest Initiative Foundation also provides support for Welcoming Week in Glencoe alongside other communities in its southwest Minnesota region. Nearby Welcoming Week events include Hutchinson and Litchfield. Details for other Welcoming Week events are available on the events calendar at swifoundation.org. SWIF is a nonprofit community foundation and a member of Welcoming America.