

2013
DIVERSE EXPERIENCES



The voice of youth from The CHEETA project

What's
inside

"CULTURES OF RIVERTON"

Our team writes about the many cultures that unite the Riverton community (p.4)

CHEETA ART

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Read about this year's projects focused on immigration, bullying and environmentalism (p.12)

CHEETA
PORTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY MAINE

CREDITS

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Sincere thanks to the foundation for funding our student projects this year.

Portland Housing Authority
CHEETA Project Publication
September 2013

ABOUT US

The **CHEETA Project** is a youth-designed, youth-led program in Portland, Maine. We seek to promote social justice and equality, and celebrate diversity by providing service learning projects and action oriented games, classes and workshops for all teens in Portland. We believe that promoting critical reflection and dialogue between youth and their community helps to foster leadership skills, gets youth to take charge of their education and experiences, and fosters new resourceful ways of engaging change. Visit www.thecheetaproject.org for more information about **The CHEETA Project** and how to get involved.

Diverse Expressions is written, designed and edited by the youth of The CHEETA Project. Part literary magazine and part newsletter, **Diverse Expressions** gives voice to stories of diversity, religion, community and life challenges while also showcasing the work of The CHEETA Project.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

A word about our mission, our youth, and what drives us here in Portland.

Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform.

-Paulo Freire, Pedagogy in Progress

Dear Reader,

Portland, Maine, is an *incredible* community. Over the past four years, I consider myself truly blessed to work with inspiring youth who are committed to making the world a brighter place, while both honoring their traditions and embracing their new life here in America.

Diverse Expressions is a fitting title for this magazine, celebrating the new community they are building here in Portland. With a collection of literary entries, artwork, photography, and articles about our summer projects, it is a snapshot of what we do and how we do it.

Youth-led, Youth-built

CHEETA was created to be an outlet for youth voices to take shape

and speak out about issues that matter to them. By designing the rules themselves, they develop the agency to impact their projects, their community, and their future.

Focusing on the issues of social justice and community building, we all aim to co-construct solutions to problems in Portland and fight against the injustices.

Paving the way for the future

CHEETA is about creating agency and opportunities for the future. Our youth attend conferences and panels, lead discussions at Universities, and get hands on experience being activists and role models in their community.

What's Next for Us

Opening new centers means more students can join and participate in

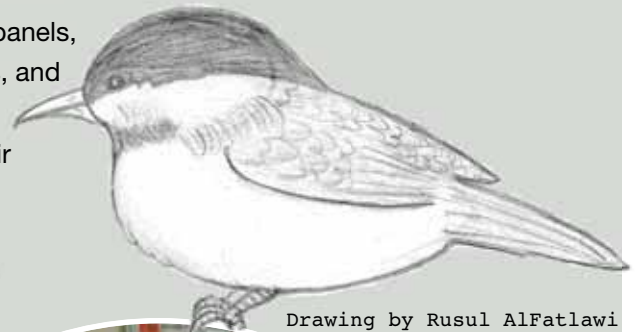
neighborhoods near them. This year we reached out to new communities and will continue to expand our efforts in 2014.

These youth are ready to take flight and want to be heard by their community.

Thank you for listening.

Katherine Stitham

CHEETA Project Program Director



THE DIVERSE CULTURES OF RIVERTON PARK

Riverton Park, located on Forest Avenue, has some of the most diverse residents in Portland and this unique community is still growing. There are currently over 24 countries represented in the neighborhood. The cultures that make up the Riverton community span from the Asia to Africa and residents are proud of this diversity.

One group that lives in this neighborhood is the Somalis, which represents the largest immigrant population in Riverton (over 1/3 the population). It has seen many changes in its community since the Somali immigrants began arriving in Maine after the civil war started in 1991. Somali culture is a big category and within it are sub-categories that are as diverse as Riverton itself. These categories are called 'tribes' and there are many in Somalia, such as Asharaf or Bantu. Even though people are from different Somali tribes in Riverton, they still share a common thread: their religion, Islam, which is very dear to them. Another unique aspect of these tribes is the fact that each has its own language, a result of Somalis descending from different tribes from the Middle East and Africa.

Sudan is another country in Africa that is well known in the Portland community, especially since Maine hosts the largest Sudanese immigrant population in the United States. In Riverton, around 6% of the residents are Sudanese.

The Sudanese began arriving 12 years ago because of a civil war in their country between Christian and



How do you feel about being from the Somalian culture?

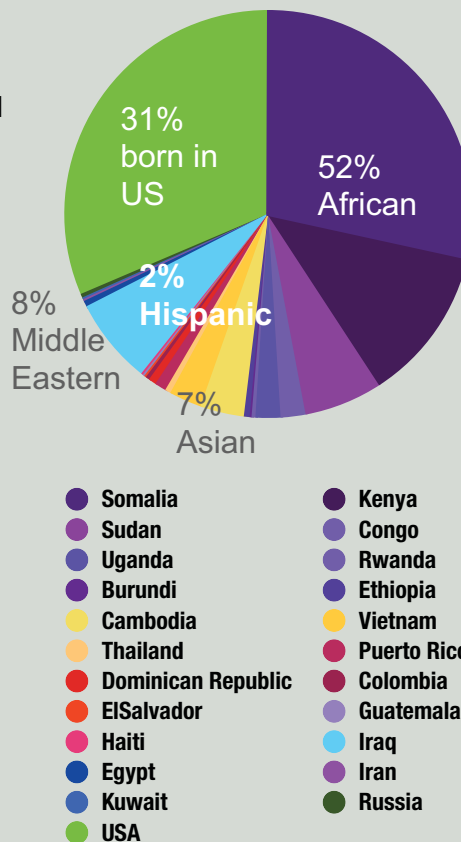
I feel that it is very different from other cultures and that we are more traditional in our beliefs and backgrounds. We are more "shown" (noticeable) when in public.
-Farhyio Hassan, 12

Acholi ethnic group from Southern Sudan, well known in our neighborhood for beautiful cultural dances and music. The northern Sudanese community speaks their tribal language or Arabic, usually depending on whether they are Christian or Muslim or where they lived after they fled Sudan.

Outside Africa, there are many people arriving to Portland from the Middle East. Ranging from Palestinian to Iraqi to Afghani and even Syrian, the Middle Eastern cultures are the newest group in Riverton and Portland today.

In Riverton Park, one of the most common populations is Iraqi. Even though they are only 8 % of the population, Middle Easterners fit in here because of their food, the language they speak, and the shared religion. Iraqi food, in this author's humble opinion, is one of the best foods in Riverton, (and a lot of people agree). Arabic is well known because it is the language of Islam and because many Somali and Sudanese people can speak it. Another thing that connects most Iraqis here is that the majority of people arriving to Portland practice Islam.

Riverton Park Countries of Origin



Muslim communities. Similar to Somalia, Sudan has many sub-ethnic and cultural groups within the country. One example is the

There are also many different cultures represented in Riverton from South and East Asia. There are more Cambodians represented in the neighborhood than any other country in Asia. Cambodians have been here for a long time. Many families came after the Cambodian Genocide in the 1980s so a lot of their kids grew up in the US. There are also

many Vietnamese, who came here around the same time from a neighboring conflict. We cannot end without mentioning that there are a few people here from South America. Here at Riverton Park,

Puerto Rican people are the most common Hispanic group, and though small in number, they are vibrant in the community. Of course, there are lots of people from the US too, and they represent everywhere! People whose families immigrated generations ago, to the youngest siblings born in an immigrant family.

Each and every one of these cultures adds something to this amazing community of Riverton Park, and have had a positive impact on this multicultural, diverse community. Please know that the cultures just described to you are not the only cultures in Riverton Park; there are certainly more. And of course, we expect more to arrive any day and welcome them to our neighborhood!

What's your favorite food in your culture? *Kebab*

-Salim Salim, 15



EID DAY IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

BY SAHARA HASSAN

I live in Riverton Park in the beautiful city of Portland, Maine. I live in a two story house that has houses connected to it like a train. Most of my neighbors are relatives, like my cousins, aunts, and uncles. We don't visit each other often as we like because everybody is busy with their lives. However, around holidays, such as Eid Alfitr and Eid Alha, we all come together and celebrate as a neighborhood and as a community.

Every Eid, we go to both Islamic and American stores and buy new clothes. My favorite outfits are like a sunset because they have many colors, all shades of purple, light blue and red. We all go together to the mosque, which is a huge religious place that is beautifully decorated with Arabic words of the prophets and Allah. There are no

chairs in the Mosque and we worship God by praying with our bodies and our minds. The day of Eid is like a carnival because it is full of happiness, joyfulness, and fun.



Sahara (left) and her family on Eid Day

After the prayer, the people in my neighborhood celebrate by all coming together and eating a huge, mouthwatering, delicious food. The matriarchs of the family, such as my mom and aunts, work hard to cook all through the night. There is so much food that it is like an overflowing waterfall. They make rice, different kinds of meat with sauces, multiple kinds of vegetables, fruit and different kinds of juice. The big meal is around lunch time and it is so special that the whole neighborhood comes together for this holiday meal. After the meal, we exchange gifts, like money and special kinds of candies. The special orange candy, named Halwa, tastes sweet like a strawberry cake. Even though my neighborhood is boring on regular days, we have so much fun celebrating our culture together on

ONE DAY IN THE JUNGLES OF AFRICA

BY OSMAN HASSAN

When I was a young boy, I used to love hanging out with my friends. My friends and I loved going to the field where we played many different kinds of made-up games. When there was no school or Madrisah, (Islamic school), we'd play games and chase goats or take them to graze in the field.

One day, nine or ten of my friends and I went deep in the fields to look for our favorite fruit, red berries. They were special kinds of berries and you can only find it in the fields of Africa. The berries were not like any berries you would find anywhere else. They were sour and sweet at the same time, and red enough to turn your mouth orange. My friends and I loved those berries and we were happy to go deep in the field to get the best kinds.

I was the youngest in my group of friends that day. All of my friends were in their mid-teenage years, almost adults, and I was only eleven years old.

“You can only find it in the fields of Africa.”

After we went to the field, we walked for two hours to get to the best trees where the most delicious berries grew. As we were picking the berries, I saw a tent that was shaped like an igloo and there was a camp fire. On the fire was a cooking pan and smoke was coming out from it. Even though it was a little far away

to see it from where I was, I smelled something awful. It was something with a mixture of blood-not animal blood, but human blood! A cold chill ran through my body and I started to sweat. I thought, who in the world lives here? Why would anybody want to live in such a place like this?

While I was pondering questions in my mind and absorbing the site, I looked to my right and saw a gigantic man wearing army pants standing by my side. When I looked up at him, wallahi, I swear, the guy I saw was as tall as one of the tallest trees. He was wearing army clothing, a pattern of the colors dark yellow and black. I thought he was a policeman at first, but he was not a policeman, he was a rebel, a thief.

I was standing by his side, and his left eye that was on my side was blinded. He had no eye on that side, it was just a black hole. If he'd seen me from that eye he would've killed me, but I was lucky.

Suddenly, I heard the sounds of trees being destroyed, cracking branches and leaves falling from the air. When the thief heard the sounds, he turned to face me. The sounds of the trees breaking was made by one of my friends who was running in the other side of the field. The worst thing was that the thief had a gun and I was



afraid that he might shoot one of my friends since you can't run faster than a gun. The thief had a friend that was standing at the other end of the field and he called out to him, “Why don't you catch these kids. Get the kids!” Since the thief was close to where I was, he was about to put his hands on me but I ducked and ran.

All my friends ran for their lives and since there were trees all over the place, I couldn't see any of them. As I was running, I came face to face with a giant tree that had been cut and was on the ground. The tree had billions of thorns and I had no choice but to run through it, since I was in grave danger. In this kind of moment somehow you'll do anything to save your life, and that's exactly what I did.

(continued on page 8)

Jungles of Africa (Continued)

I ran into the thorny tree and I was still running. The thorns got into my skin, but at that time I didn't feel any pain. One of my friends came back for me and got me out of the giant tree and we stopped there to rest. The thief almost spotted us, but he didn't because, good thing, we hid behind the trees and then ran.

When we finally caught up to our friends, breathing hard, we looked around and realized that we didn't know where we were. My friends and I walked until we found a safe place where we knew how to find our houses. We sat under the shade of a big tree and counted ourselves. We thought all of us had been together, but we were missing one friend. The friend we were missing

had only one leg because he was shot when he was little and lost his leg. We asked each other where he was and we were really afraid. We thought maybe the rebels had him and were going to cut his other leg off or, worse, kill him. We looked around, but there was nothing. After thirty minutes of waiting, pondering questions in our minds and pacing back and forth, my friend came. We were so glad to see him. We asked him what they did to him and he told us that they didn't do anything. The thieves only wanted to ask him questions,. Once we knew he was okay, we finally went home exhausted.

My friends had sore legs and were tired from running and walking all day, but I was hurt badly because the thorns had cut me. I was bleeding all over my arms and legs,

and most of the thorns were still on my body. When I got home, my worried mother and grandmother took all of the thorns out and it took them an hour. The rebels that were chasing us were killed two years later by the police in Kenya on an Eid day.

After the whole horrible event, all of my friends had managed to bring back their two packs full of red berries. Unfortunately, my berries were gone, spilled out of my bag when I was trapped in the thorns of the giant tree. There were only a few of them left in my pack, but all my friends, my best friends, gave me half of what they had. My friends and I promised each other that if we ever wanted berries, we'd never go far again.

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## RP: Is it Really Dangerous?

By Zimzim Mohamed



I live in Riverton Park; it has a reputation of being rundown and dangerous and is looked down on by many. When I first moved here I was both afraid and ashamed to be here. I was afraid because I believed what people told had me about Riverton. They had said there are fights almost every day, and there would always be police cars coming in and out. I felt ashamed because I did not want to live in a place where people thought was no better than trash.

I hate how when someone asks where I live and I answer Riverton Park they go “ooh” like there was something wrong with me for living there. I guess I cannot blame them because I acted like that before I moved here, but it is wrong. Riverton Park is not dangerous, what people say are just stereotypes. It is a place that I would really miss if I moved away. It might not be the cleanest or quietest, but it is comfortable when you get use to it.

Summer is my favorite season in my neighborhood. That is when everything really comes to life. In the summertime, kids are outside from early morning to late night. They never seem to get tired of playing because they are trapped in the house all winter long. They are like butterflies wanting to get out of the cocoon as summer days come so they can be free. All sorts of smells are present in summer; some mouth watering and others closer to a dead squirrel left out in the sweltering sun.

In summer, everyone is active. They either play soccer in a backyard, or out in the basketball court where boys think taking off their shirts is cool and will look more attractive. Summer afternoons are usually the best because my friends and I bring our younger siblings to the playground, so they can play. We usually sit down and catch up. I suggest that instead of believing the stereotypes about Riverton, come and check it out. It takes a very long time for a reputation to disappear but it does not mean that the place has not changed. Riverton park is just an example.



Zimzim Mohamed (right) with  
Community Projects  
Coordinator, Allison Rusk



# LIFE IS A TEST

BY MARYAN HASSAN

Life is a test that we do not pay attention to. Some of us just live as if we were animals. We wake up, eat, drink, walk, and work. We follow the same routine the next day. We are so busy and focused in our lives that we do not think further. Perhaps, we think and act as if we are going to live like this forever; that this world is the only place that we will ever be. My question is, if so, why do we die? Where do we go when we die? How are we even here? Why are we here? For that last question, I believe we are here to be grateful and to obey our Creator.

There are many religions in this world that guide us. Some are also non-believers, believing that there is nothing guiding our path, our choices, and our lives.

For me, I cannot imagine such a lonesome world view. "The only time we waste is the time thinking we are alone." If we follow the message of this quote, I believe we would live our lives differently, believing we are never alone; God is always with us, watching our every move, and testing us.

My parents, older siblings, and Dugsi (Islamic (Qur'an) school) teachers always told me we are being watched all the time. The angels of God are around us, writing everything we do and say; Good and bad. God Himself is with us all the time.

Religion is more to me than just my culture. Religion explains things that we cannot prove; for example, the afterlife. I learned, in my religion that this life is just a test. The one we will not die from is the afterlife. What we do in this life, earns us a place in the hereafter. From my understanding, it is impossible for us to explain the afterlife without Faith. If we do believe in it, we



really cannot prove it unless we go there. Additionally, once we do go there, there is no way we can return and tell the other.

"It might seem strange to start a story with an ending. But, all endings are also beginnings. We just don't know it at the time" (Mitch Albom). The first time I read this quote, I was a little confused. The second time, my mind was all over it.

One can define this quote in various of ways. One example from my life

is when I moved from Kenya, Africa. I had no idea where I was going or how my life was going to be at that time. What I knew for a fact was that my life there was ending. I was leaving the people I knew all my life. I was leaving my friends, my school, my teachers, and my home behind. I came here and I started a whole new chapter of my life; a completely different story. I was on a different continent in an absolutely different country. I met new people, started a new school, and made new friends. I am living a new life that I never knew about initially. My ending story was a new beginning for me. I believe the same thing goes for those who die.

As a believer of Islam, I believe in the afterlife and Heaven for those who earn. To return to Mitch Albom's quote I believe when we lose people, even though we might feel sorry, hopeless and cry for them thinking their life has ended, they might not feel the same way for themselves. Besides, it is a new beginning for

them. I believe a life they would trade with anything on earth, something we have never seen or heard off, nor the human mind is capable of imagining. Knowing this to be true has given me great comfort.

My daily experiences on earth give me clues. I see plenty that we cannot explain or provide reasons for- I argue that life itself is one of them. I like to think that life is a test and we should be seeing it that way.

# REFLECTIONS

We asked CHEETA staff and members at the Riverton center to write responses to some reflective questions. Here's what they had to say:



## If you could visit one place in the world, where would it be?

--If I were to visit one place it would be Mecca or Medina because it is where Islam started. I am always told religion is number one from my mom and dad and I would love to learn about the history while also experiencing it.--

--I would like to visit Australia because I love Australian landmarks. One of the landmarks I would like to visit is the Great Barrier Reef. Another reason why I would go to Australia is because of the Australian accent; I love Australian accents and hope to pick up an Australian accent someday. Another landmark I would like to see is the Sydney Opera House. The Sydney Opera is one of Australia's biggest landmarks in a city that I would like to visit.--

---One place I would want to visit in this world is Mecca, Saudi Arabia. I would like to visit there because it has some of the most important places in this world for Muslims, such as the Khaba. The Khaba is a hole in the wall for people to put their heads in, which can erase dambi. Dambi is what you get when you make a sin. Every year, millions of people come here to erase their sins.

--I would visit Boston, because I have a lot of family members there and I really like the city because of the sports teams and beautiful weather. I really like the Boston Celtics, I was a fan of them since I came to America. They are the best team in NBA history stats wise according to NBA titles. My favorite player is Paul Pierce.--

--I would love to travel to Brazil. It is the one region of the world I haven't been to. As a nature lover and adventurer, it would be an amazing country to explore. I really want to backpack across South America! I have spoken Spanish since I was 10, so it would be a great way to put it to use. And I'm sure the food there is amazing!--

## If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

--If I were to change one thing about this world it would be all the judgments amongst different cultures. I see and believe that everything people focus on is the differences instead of our similarities. That is why we have all these problems; we do not see the bigger picture, which is that we won't be living in this world forever. We have to make the best of it while we are actually here. Scientifically, our DNA is 99.9% the same, so differences between race, religion, and culture do not matter. If we are that much the same, shouldn't we embrace it? It's like we have it upside down, 99.9% different and .01% alike.--

--If I had the power to change one thing in the world it would be to make peace with everyone, to stop war, and for everyone to have equal wealth and to feed those who don't have food. One more thing-- I would like to find a cure for cancer.--

--If I could change one thing in this world, it would be recycling. I would pick recycling because we can reuse everything and we wouldn't be using all the world's resources. (cont'd on next page)

**If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be? (cont'd)**

We need to educate people about recycling so they can do it. If everyone in the world knew how to recycle and they did it everyday, we would only use 20% of our natural resources.--

--The thing I would change would be the fact that people don't get equal rights in the world and that there are lots of wars in states and countries that I would want to turn into peace.--

--If I could change one thing about this world, I would change cars that work on gasoline to electric cars because they save oil and they give us a cleaner atmosphere. Electric cars are much quieter than others with big engines. And lastly, all the smoke that cars produce is killing the ozone. That's what I want to change about this world.--

--If I could change one thing about this world, it would be making everyone rich because it's not fair that some people are rich and others are poor. Everyone wants to be rich but it's hard because you have to use your money carefully. But still, if I had the chance to change one thing about this world it would be making everyone rich.--



Photograph by Amal Ismail



## The Forgotten People

By Sahara Hassan

I am standing all alone under the sad gray sky wondering what I am going to do. Where will I find food? Everything in this town is gray and lifeless. I left my mother lying on her bed, clutching to her life. She is so out of it that she can't even lift her head up, let alone her body. As am standing here, so many desperate people are trying to find food in the surrounding area. We are all starving and would do anything to stay alive. For kids my age and old people, it's hard to even eat because it hurts to breathe. I see little children fighting over food they found on the ground and no one is doing anything to stop it because everyone is busy finding food. I am standing behind a dead tree, wind swirling around me as if it wants to take me up. My stomach is yelling at me, telling me to feed it whatever. My body is opposing with me, saying that I have no strength in me and should give up. However, I am not letting that happen, instead going to one of the trash cans to find anything for my mother and I. As I dig in, memories of that tragic moment come flying to my mind when a few weeks ago, a sudden earthquake shook the whole town. It destroyed everything in its path. We were lucky to be alive, but even though we lived in poverty before, the earthquake left us with nothing but our bodies. There is no food, and the water we saved is not even enough to bathe in. We're not even humans to be treated inhuman because we're just here to die. Why isn't anyone coming to help us? Where is the rest of the world? Who will be our hero to add to our zero? I already lost my father during the earthquake when our house fell on top of him, I can not afford to lose my mother too. I don't want to become an orphan, like many are here. I can't complain now. I can't give up now, even if the rest of the world gave up on us. I run to one of the trash cans and dig through the rotten food. Surprisingly, I come across a box full of strawberries and

a loaf of bread. I am so excited, I no longer felt hunger. I run as fast as I can to my mother, happy tears running down my cheeks. Sharp glass pokes through my bare feet, like a knife leaving a trail of blood behind. I still run like there is no tomorrow. I don't really care because now, I have forgotten that I am poor.



Drawing by Maryan Isack

## It's Simply

By Maryan Hassan

I'm not living in my past  
Do you wanna last?  
Follow the rules very  
I don't need no prince  
Don't waste money buying outfits  
cause am not impressed by no  
swagg  
at least not no more  
But here's the deal  
Just... just help me!  
Be that person I can lead on  
Stand beside me and help me fight  
Shaytan  
Help me please our Lord, the  
Almighty, the final Judge.  
Lets just be servants,  
good servants to Allah.  
Be the one for me  
The one that brings me closer to  
Him.  
And you be just fine.

## Biggest Challenge

By Asha Hassan

The biggest challenge I had to face was hearing the words "your aunt had just passed away." My aunt was always there for her family whenever they were in need. She always took her time to help others and smiled through it. Many people had respected her and thought of her as a role model and an inspiring person. When I heard those words from my father that day, it was like someone had ripped up my insides and took away everything I had. I was so shocked I could not move or speak a single word. I just stood there and let everything and everyone go by me. As I looked around me all I saw were parents crying, children running around, and people so shocked they moved as though they were dreaming. As I stood there my father came up to me and said "it will get better," but I thought, things will never get better after this. I thought my whole life was over. Tears just came flowing down my cheeks, tears that I can never hold back, tears that every person that knew her was crying, tears that would never bring back my amazing aunt. Whenever I think of this I remember that day and all that had happened and how horrible I had felt. Despite all that I had faced things are getting better and coming back to the way they once were.

## Untitled

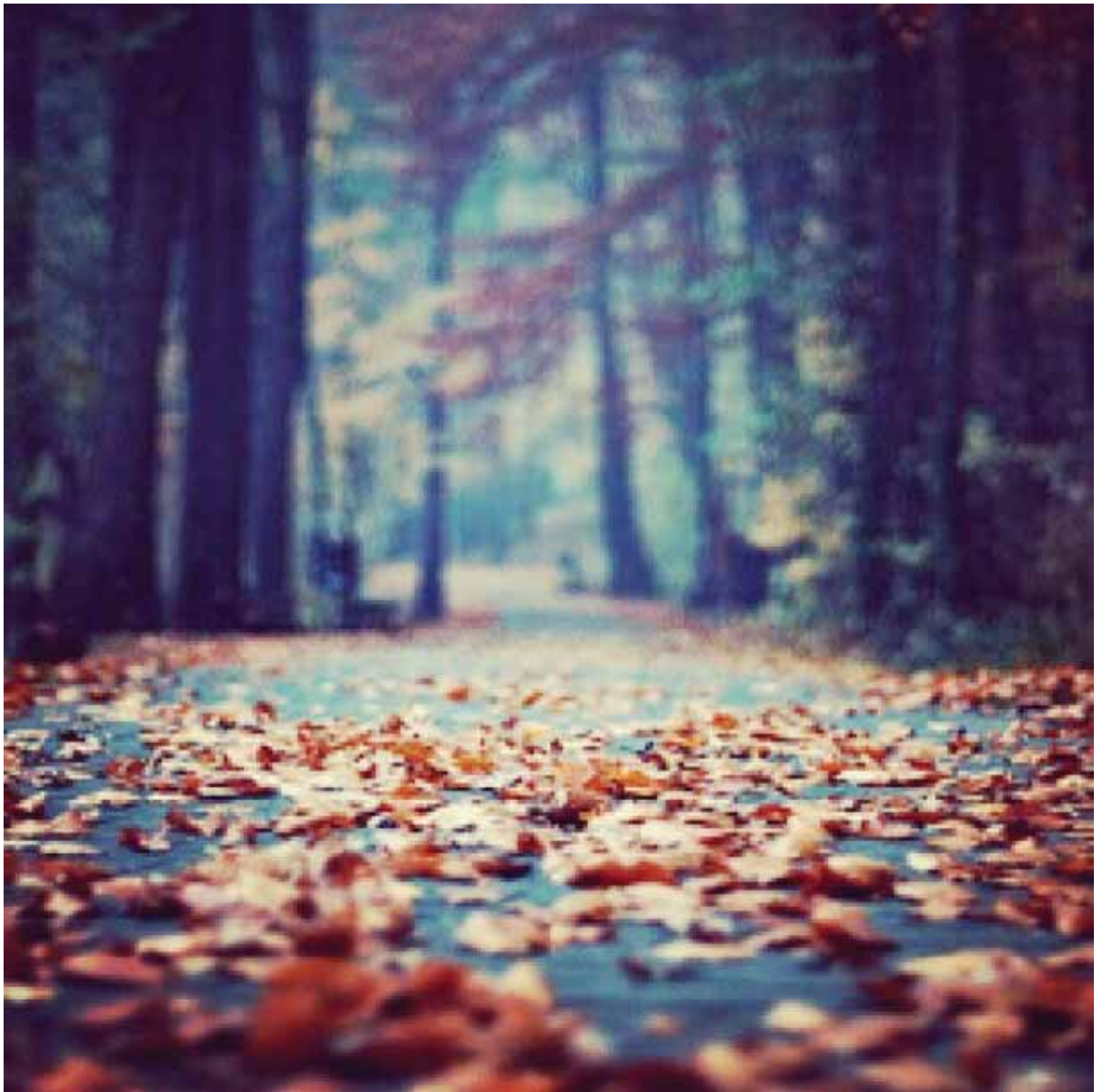
By Sahara Hassan

Anger  
Boiling water  
volcano erupting  
ravaging fiery flames

Challenge  
A stairway of life  
a bitter taste  
of determination

peaceful  
like a breeze in the  
early morning sky  
a complete silence  
just before a rainstorm

Drawing by Ayan Ahmed



Photograph by Amal Ismail

## Are you a writer?

CHEETA is looking for submissions... If you are interested in writing for our magazine or website or have artwork you would like to showcase, please email [cheetaproject@gmail.com](mailto:cheetaproject@gmail.com) and let us know! Anyone is welcome to contribute!

## Writing Topics

- Community
- Social Justice
- Life goals
- What ever inspires you!

## All the things you wanted to say

Let us hear your voice. The good, the bad, the absurd! tell us what you think about your life and community.

## DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS

A CHEETA Project Publication

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# THE CHEETA PROJECT

Community Hope through Education Empowerment Training and Action



Kassim narrates part of the "Immigration" documentary

## COMMUNITY PROJECTS

This summer, CHEETA members chose to focus on three issues: bullying, immigration and environmentalism. Youth staff members Zimzim Mohamed and Salim Salim write about how each of these projects engaged with the Riverton community.

In the Community Projects group, we combine the 'action' and 'education' in CHEETA with the goal of helping the Riverton Park community. This summer, our projects focused on three topics that the members came up in discussions during the school year. These topics are environment, bullying, and immigration.

### Environment

On the topic of environment, the members decided to focus on a problem they saw everyday, which was a lack of recycling. We came up with several projects all year to tackle the issue including incorporating games that were educational and tested how well Riverton residents knew how to recycle in CHEETA's yearly carnival. One of these games was an obstacle course that involved separating plastic bottles by type of plastic and then separating a bag of recyclables into the correct bins. The

members also made a sign for the recycling area in Riverton Park which tells residents in Riverton what types of items should be recycled. We made this sign because many of the residents were not aware there was a place to recycle in their community, or did not know how to use it.

### Immigration & Bullying

Our second project involved both immigration and bullying. We wanted to teach the community about the different cultures within Riverton in order to fix the problem of negative stereotypes about racial and religious differences, so we decided to make a video about the different cultures in Riverton. The video includes interviews with Riverton residents who explain the process of immigrating to America and what life in the U.S. has been like since moving here.



### Anti-Bullying

John Gaither from the ACLU stopped by to lead a discussion on anti-bullying laws in Maine. Kids learned the importance of notifying school administration in instances of bullying.

# EVENTS



## Camping at Bradbury Mountain

By Sahara Hassan

Those for whom camping was a new experience learned a lot this year, including me. Thanks to a generous donation from LL Bean, we were able to bring more kids camping this year than ever before. As one camper mentioned:

"I learned many things while I was at camp, and one of the things that stuck with me was learning how to cook. I always wanted to learn how to cook scrambled eggs. So, I carefully watched Kate make delicious scrambled eggs. In the future, I am hoping to open my own restaurant so it was a good experience for me to learn different ways to cook."

It was not all fun and games; there was a lot of learning too. "While at camp, many things were different from my daily life. I never had to build a fire with sticks or constantly check whether the fire would die. Another change was sleeping on the ground. It was very uncomfortable. I realized from that experience that I take my comfortable bed for granted and basically everything else I have in my life. I saw everything from a different point of view. I learned to be grateful for what I have."

**"I saw everything from a different point of view."**

As for me, camp had a big impact. From the first day when we arrived, it was raining, hard. It was all wet and yucky. We had to build a tent in the rain and our clothes got wet. We also had to make a fire, and that was the hardest thing to do because the sticks we gathered were all wet. It just made suffocating smoke and it took us a long time to make it. Sleeping was one of the most difficult things I had to endure.

It was so uncomfortable; the floor was cold and hard with different kinds of bugs were everywhere.

Yet despite the fact that we had to endure all those hardships, I have to say there were some special moments too. That time when we were sitting around the fire at night and eating s'mores and listening to Kate tell folktales, or when we went to the woods and we saw overarching trees stretching upwards as far as our eyes could see. That time when we were listening to the trees high five each other and send waves of wind at us. It was nice getting away from the busy world for once.



### CARNIVAL

Our carnival was a great success again this year, with over 170 youth attending. Kids competed in games such as the “Color Run,” “Shaving Grandpa,” and learned martial arts from local instructors. 14 organizations from around Portland were there to help, including UNE’s Community Health Center and Healthy Portland. We already can’t wait for next year’s event!



### FUNTOWN

It’s never too late to try the the things you’ve always been wanting to explore!

We took 25 staff and members to Funtown/Splashtown USA for a day of laughter, excitement and rides to celebrate the hard work of the summer.



### OPEN MIC NIGHT

The fundraising team organized an open mic night at Local Sprouts Cafe on Congress Street in Portland. Two local bands were featured and many of the kids got up on stage to read poems and stories.

We also sold crafts made by CHEETA members, while Sahara Hassan shared her talent for drawing henna tattoos!



### END OF SUMMER CELEBRATION

On our last day at CHEETA, the staff and most dedicated members gathered to celebrate the end of summer and our achievements with a BBQ and awards ceremony. We ended the day with a “Whipped Cream Challenge” competition and a “Slip N’ Slide.”



# WORKSHOPS & MENTORING



## Learn Something New!

One of the most exciting aspects of The CHEETA Project is the opportunity to learn new skills through our workshops. All workshops are led by volunteers who have an interest in working with kids and empowering them with important life skills.



## Mentoring Committee

The Mentoring Committee focuses on building relationships between CHEETA members and younger kids in the community (who are not old enough to participate in the project). This year we partnered with the Boys & Girls Club, another youth empowerment program in our neighborhood. Over the past summer, we worked on coming up with games to play with the kids,

including kickball and an obstacle course. The Boys & Girls Club helped us lead the games and provided us with the tools to make them happen. It was a great experience working with younger kids and I hope that we get to partner with them again next year for more activities together.

**-Ismail Abdi, Youth Programming Officer**

| WORKSHOPS | PHOTOGRAPHY                                                                                                                                         | CREATIVE PLAY                                                                                                                                    | CRAFTS                                                                                        | PUBLIC RELATIONS                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | <p>Kids learned how to scan objects and take digital photographs, which were used to make a mural for display at the Health Center in Riverton.</p> | <p>Kids in the Creative Play group learned about theater and what it's like to "be in character" through fun games and role play activities.</p> | <p>Craft projects included decoupage, painting tiles with alcohol ink and jewelry making.</p> | <p>The PR team managed the weekly updates on CHEETA's Facebook, Twitter and WordPress blog. They also learned how to make this magazine!</p> |

## CHEETA is Expanding!

This year, CHEETA went to Kennedy Park, Front Street, and Sagamore Village to recruit youth to participate in our CHEETA Design team and help figure out what CHEETA will look like in each of these neighborhoods.

Members of our design team attending mediation training with Opportunity Alliance, performed at the Positive Youth Development Institute, and surveyed their own neighborhoods to find out what was really going on in their community and start to plan what is coming next.

In the Fall, we will transform the surveys into project proposals and work with community partners to

create 4 different programs. So far the themes in each area seem to be:

**Kennedy Park: Job Resource Center and Aspirations**

**Front Street: Academic Support and Youth Programming**

**Sagamore Village: Mentoring and Youth Support**

**Riverton Park: Youth Leadership and Innovation**

Each neighborhood will work within those themes and with each other to share resources and collaborate. To get involved, email [cheetaproject@gmail.com](mailto:cheetaproject@gmail.com) or sign



Design team members research about community needs

## FRONT ST.



### From the Ground Up

This summer youth from Front Street decided to take a stand about the limited programming offered in their neighborhood.

They are developing a Portland Housing Authority Study Center in the community that will open this October. From there, they hope to expand programming for youth there.

# GAMVIES



**RIDDLES FOR  
YOUR BRAIN!**

## OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

Look carefully...  
What do you see?



Is it a woman's face  
or someone playing a  
saxophone?



A vase or two faces?

**Q1: What has a foot but no legs?**

**Q2: Poor people have it. Rich people need it. If you eat it you die. What is it?**

**Q3: What comes down but never goes up?**

**Q4: I'm tall when I'm young and I'm short when I'm old. What am I?**

**Q5: What goes up when rain comes down?**

**Q6: If I drink, I die. If i eat, I am fine. What am I?**

**Q7: What word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?**

**Q8: What travels around the world but stays in one spot?**

**Q9: What occurs once in a minute, twice in a moment and never in one thousand years?**

**Q10: If I have it, I don't share it. If I share it, I don't have it. What is it?**

*(to see the answers, hold this book upside-down and look in a mirror!)*

A: A tile

A: Iron

A: A name

A: The letter M

A: A secret

A: A sign

A: Nothing

A: A name

A: A name

A: A name

Merci teşekkür ederim 谢谢你! gracias شكرا Cảm ơn Bác Mahad sanid

# A HUGE THANKS!

We could not run this program without the amazing support from partners, donors, and volunteers. Special thanks to the Sam L Cohen Foundation for its support this year!

## Our Partners

Thanks to all the organizations who worked with us this year to make our program a success!

- Opportunity Alliance
- Portland Public Health
- SNAP education
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension
- Boys and Girls Club
- Ripple Effect
- Center for Grieving Children
- Camp Bishopswood
- Portland Police Department
- Portland Fire Department
- Portland Public Library
- Portland ConnectEd
- Riverton Health Clinic

- University of New England, CHANNELS
- University of Maine Farmington
- Positive Youth Development Institute
- Community Partnership for Protecting Children
- Discovery Martial Arts
- Project Bazia
- Mayo St Arts
- Cooking Matters
- St Lawrence Art Center
- Local Sprouts

## Our Donors

Thank you for your contributions!

- Sam L Cohen Foundation
- LL Bean Charitable Foundation
- Bob's Discount Furniture
- Hannaford's Market
- Lowe's Home Improvement
- Subway
- Rosemont Bakery
- Panera Bread
- Dunkin' Donuts
- Amato's

- True Value Hardware
- Aubuchon Hardware
- Portland House of Pizza
- Deborah Duffet

## Our Volunteers

Your hours made all the difference!

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Kelly Ward         | Allison Stitham     |
| Sophia Rosenfeld   | Deb Duffet          |
| Samantha Lam       | Danielle Gauvin     |
| Brooke Luro        | Duncan Elder        |
| Allison Strausberg | Hillary Wentworth   |
| Emma Connor        | Kate Sommerville    |
| Ismail Abdi        | Zimzim Mohamed      |
| Sahra Hassan       | Sahara Hassan       |
| Naimo Ukash        | Asha Hassan         |
| Salim Salim        | Maryan Isack        |
| Abdiyo Abdille     | Hamdia Ahmed        |
| Abdinasir Ahmed    | Amina Ahmed         |
| Divine Macibiri    | Pacifique Bizimungu |
|                    | Rusul AlFatlawi     |

## DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS

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[www.thecheetaproject.org](http://www.thecheetaproject.org)



Photograph by Amal Ismail