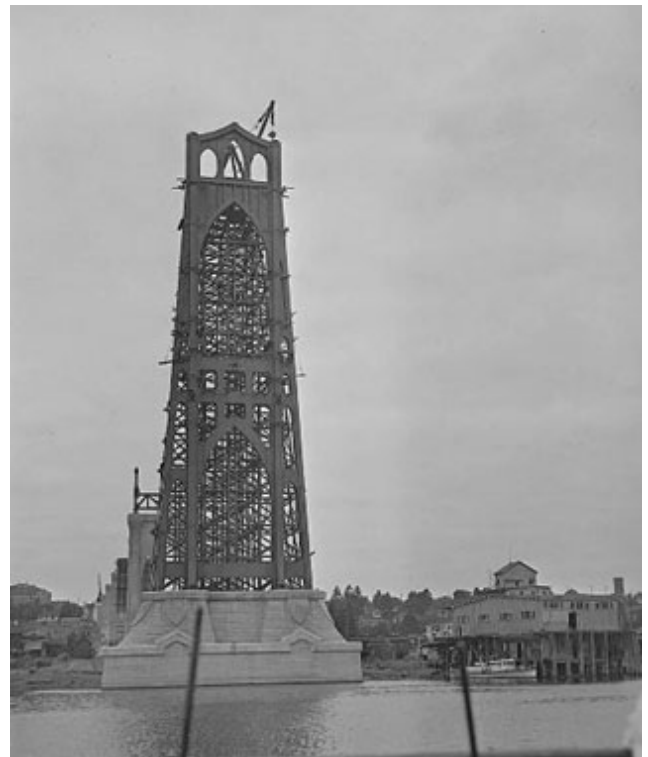


# *Hosting a Community History Storytelling*

*Lessons from Our United Villages' Community Outreach*



# *Hosting a Community History Storytelling*

A Community History Storytelling is a social gathering for shared learning. Everyone who lives in the community is invited. This venue provides opportunities for elders and long-time residents to share their stories and memorabilia with residents of all ages.

Community Outreach of Our United Villages believes Community History Storytelling:

- *provides* an open and safe environment for neighbors to engage with one another
- is a bridge-builder for all ages, connecting people through shared learning
- *recognizes*, honors elders and long-time residents
- *inspires* people to think about how they will become part of *creating* history in their communities
- *enhances* the social vitality of our diverse communities

Historically, when Community Outreach focused on one neighborhood at a time, Neighborhood History Storytelling helped set the tone for community-building activities to come.

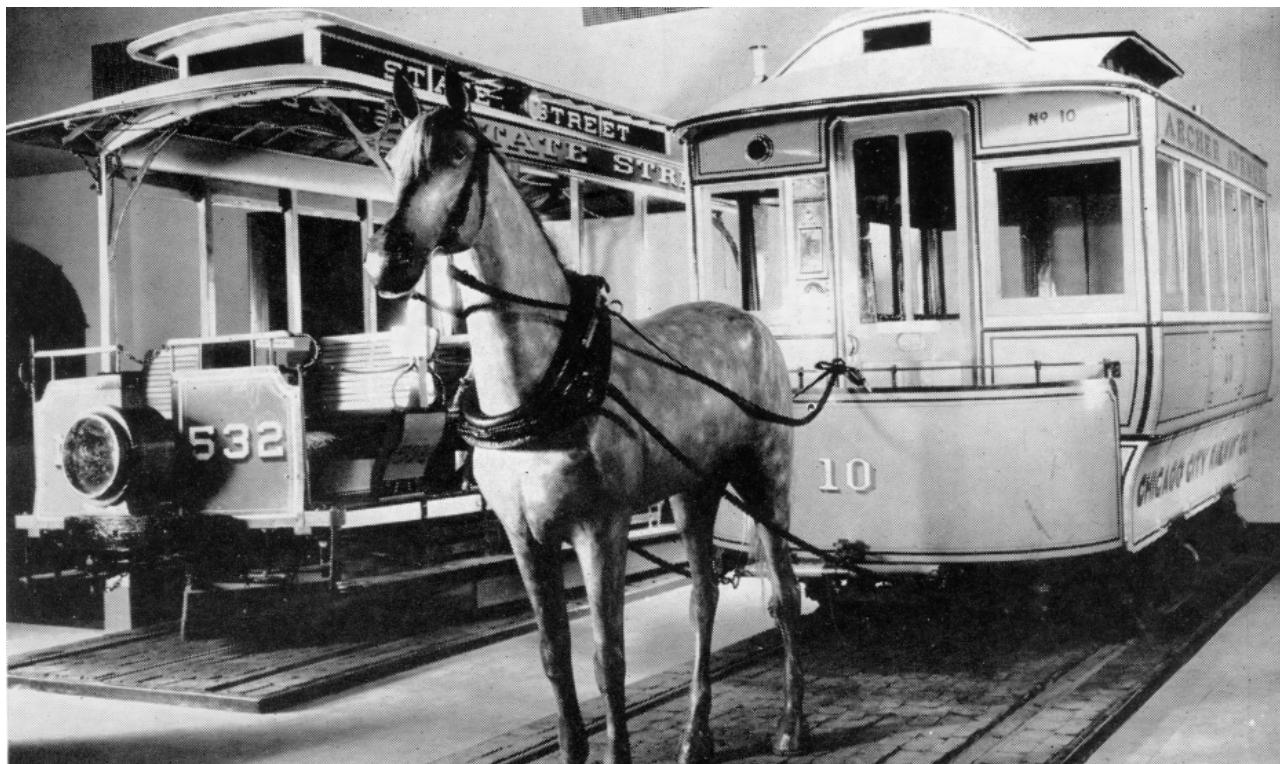
Community Outreach of Our United Villages hosted Neighborhood History Storytelling events in Boise, Humboldt, and Overlook and Community History Storytelling events in Southeast, Northeast and North Portland. What we learned through our approach and our practices we share freely with community. We aspire to be a catalyst for inclusive community-building efforts. This document is like a tool chest, take from it whatever works best for achieving your own neighborhood or community goals

If you would like to explore possibilities for hosting a Community History Storytelling event, contact the Community Outreach office to schedule a free consultation.

Our United Villages' Community Outreach  
3625 N. Mississippi Ave. Portland, OR 97227  
(503) 546-7499 email: [outreach@ourunitedvillages.org](mailto:outreach@ourunitedvillages.org)  
[www.ourunitedvillages.org](http://www.ourunitedvillages.org)

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# *Purpose and Vision*

Why are you hosting this event? (Honoring elders, capturing history, educating community)

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What are your desired outcomes?

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What resources are available to you for making it happen? (people, money, time)

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What timelines and deadlines, if any, need to be considered in your planning? (neighborhood newsletters, calendar announcements, availability of potential speakers)

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# Research History

Research historical archives for photographs, film clips, newspaper articles, papers and books. Great sources of information are public libraries, the Oregon Historical Society, neighborhood schools and churches and the internet.

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Talk to people, ask them to think about history buffs or long-time residents who have stories to tell, collections of old photographs, memorabilia. Check in with neighborhood associations and senior centers.

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Collect items or artifacts that can be used in a visual display at the event. Encourage neighbors to explore their attics and basements for historical memorabilia; it's a fun way to get the whole community involved.

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# *Generate Interest*

Share your enthusiasm for the event with others. Talk to people about the purpose and highlight special features (guest speakers, performing artists).

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Identify someone to help with coordinating your event. What skills or interests will they bring?

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Determine additional talents or skills for enhancement of your event. How will you go about acquiring them?

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Explore collaborations with other groups or organizations in your neighborhood.

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Map your community's assets for potential support. (In-kind donations, financial contributions, skills and talents, child care, food preparation)

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# *Locate Facility*

Estimate the number of people you expect to attend your storytelling event.

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Make sure the site you choose provides accommodations in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Where are the accessible sites in your community?

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Is the space close to public transportation, is parking available?

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Is there a facility in the area that has historical significance?

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Do you need a designated room for child care?

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Test the acoustics for sound projection. Do voices carry well or do they echo?

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Based on layout of space (stage, seating, lighting, kitchen), does the facility fit your needs? Is the space inviting?

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# Storyteller Outreach

Do you know of someone who has an inspirational story to share about the community? This might be someone who has lived, worked, played, or attended school or church in the community. How many speakers do you want to feature?

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Talk to neighbors, faith-based communities, schools, neighborhood and business associations, community and senior centers, and other groups. Ask for feedback and referrals:

- Who are the long-time residents, or people who have a connection with the neighborhood, community?
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- Who has an inspirational story to tell about the neighborhood, community?
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- Are there elder performing artists in the community who might be interested in participating in the event? (poet, dancer, musician)
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- Send a letter or email to potential speakers inviting them to participate. Describe the purpose and vision of the event in the invitation. Follow-up with a personal phone call or email to request a meeting with potential speakers before the event.
- Assess interest and determine if it is a good fit for both the speaker and for your event. Determine the topic or time in history they wish to talk about. Be clear about the amount of time allocated for each speaker.
- Get a commitment from selected speakers. Encourage them to bring photographs, artifacts and memorabilia along with their stories. How will they want to be introduced to the community?

# People

Identify who will:

**Host:** Welcome guests and oversees logistics

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**Moderator:** Sets the tone for the event, introduces speakers, and facilitates open forum and/or questions.

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**Child care provider:** Certified provider or trusted relationship

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**Photographer, Videographer, and/or Media:** Responsible for getting permission to take photographs.

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**Note taker and/or Journalist:** Responsible for compiling notes and permission to share information.

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**Translator:** outreach materials.

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**Interpreter:** at event.

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**Caterer:** food providers, and/or someone to set up and help serve food

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# *Design Outreach Materials*

Will you distribute flyers, press releases, posters, postcards, and/or calendar announcements?

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What images might you use in your outreach materials (photo of an old school or main street)?

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What languages have been identified in the community where you plan to host your event? How will you meet your needs for translations based on what you learn?

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# *Locate Equipment and Materials*

Food supplies: plates, napkins, cups, utensils, serving platters, coffee containers, microwave, warmer, stove, etc.

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Office supplies: nametags, pens, chart pads, markers, etc.

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Presentation supplies: microphone, slide projector, etc.

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Capturing the event: video camera, digital recorder, camera

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Raffle prizes: donations/purchases from local businesses, stores, or restaurants

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Take-away: something information such as handout of a brief history overview or a gift item such as a coaster with old picture on it

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# Food

What type of food do you want to serve (appetizers, light lunch, full meal)?

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How do you want to serve the food (buffet style, served at the table)?

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What resources are available in your community for in-kind donation?

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Solicit donations from local restaurants or grocery stores

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Determine a menu for food and drinks

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Consider and accommodate:

- food preferences and needs, including vegetarian and vegan
- food allergies (lactose intolerant, gluten-free options)
- religious and cultural differences (type of meat, time of year)

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# Getting the Word Out

Identify scope of outreach (neighborhood boundary, city-wide)

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Use strategies that ensure everyone within the scope of outreach is invited to participate; be *inclusive*. Options include mass mailing through a mail service, distribution via neighborhood newsletter, or hand delivering invitations door-to-door.

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Identify community calendars appropriate for posting your announcement.

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Think about a variety of ways to “get the word out” about your event. Consider posting flyers in local laundromats, markets, and other local businesses; create a press release to distribute to local newspapers and church bulletins; or speak at a neighborhood association meeting, PTA meeting, or other community events. If your event is free, Public Service Announcements (PSA) on the radio or television are options.

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# *Designing the Room*

You can enhance the room setting by bringing flowers for your resource table; posting inspirational quotes on the wall; displaying photographs, or providing background music. What ideas do you have?

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Use the space below to draw or write about how you will set up and design the room for the event (greeting people, mingling space, visual displays, food, speakers standing or sitting, audience standing or sitting, child care, layout for tables and chairs).

Did you think of any other supplies you will need (extra tables or chairs, podium, kid's table)?

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# Write Agenda

Example of an agenda:

11:00-11:15	Mingle, Food, & Visual displays
11:15-11:25	Welcome & Thank You
11:25-11:30	Logistics (bathroom, cell phones off)
11:30-11:35	Purpose, Background, & Agenda
11:35-12:25	Scheduled speakers and/or performers
12:25-12:55	Open invite to share stories and memories and for people to ask questions related to community history
12:55-1:00	Closing Comments & Thank You

Who will do what?

- Greet
- Host
- Take notes
- Take photos
- Facilitate/  
Moderate

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Host Event!

Notes:

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## Facilitation

Moderator sets the tone for the event by:

- Welcoming people as they come in
- Checking in with storytellers to make sure they feel at ease and have everything they need
- Conveying to the group the purpose of the venue -
  - To listen and learn about history on the topic
- Reminding the audience that storytellers share experiences, memories and perspectives that are uniquely their own
  - We're not here to *debate* what people share

Moderator introduces featured speakers and facilitates open forum

- Confirm ahead of time with speakers the way in which they want to be introduced
  - One or two sentences, *brief*
- Facilitate questions for the speakers from the community
  - Be mindful of inappropriate questions presented during this time. If the storyteller feels uncomfortable responding to a question, they can choose to pass on it.
- Invite people, who were not *featured* speakers, to openly share a story related to the topic
  - Monitor the time so that as many people as want to can speak.

Moderator closes with thanks to the speakers and the community.

# Follow-up

Send thank you notes to donors, guest speakers and volunteers. You could include a photograph from the event, or make the card itself a montage of the photos that were taken.

How do you plan to follow-up?

- Will you send a report back to neighbors?
- Will you compile and share the stories in any way (website, printed material, audio to check-out from library, media coverage)?
- Will you provide another opportunity to convene (2<sup>nd</sup> history storytelling, launch a neighborhood history group)?
- How can you stay connected to the people who attended?

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Debrief the event with organizers and/or guests:

What were the greatest strengths?

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What could have been done differently?

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What will we take away from this event?

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# *Principles of Outreach: Community History Storytelling Events*

Our principles and values for coordinating Neighborhood and Community History Storytelling events will hopefully inspire and guide you in planning one. Community Outreach does not claim to be experts in event planning, rather we are a learning organization, aspiring to be a catalyst for community-building efforts.

## **Relationship Building**

With respectful intention, we introduced ourselves to long-time residents and elders in the community. We worked to cultivate meaningful relationships which helped to obtain commitment from 4-8 featured speakers willing to share their stories and memorabilia.

## **Format**

- The History Storytelling was hosted by a team of three people who took on the responsibilities of host, moderator, photographer, note taker, and facilitator.
- Food was served and childcare was provided
- Each featured speaker had 15 minutes each for storytelling
- Speakers were encouraged to bring things to “show and tell”
- Time was allocated for open sharing

## **Facilities**

We hosted events at a high school, in a ballroom, senior center, and historical building. The venue provided ADA accessibility, connected with public transportation, and accommodated community, comfortably.

## **Day and Timeframe**

We generally hosted our Storytelling events on a Saturday from 11:00 am-1:00 pm.

## **Inviting Community Participation**

We created a postcard and poster to get the word out. Invitation language read: “You are invited to share your memories of (community name) and learn about the history of your community as told by the people who live here.” Outreach materials incorporated historic photographs from the neighborhood such as the school, a main street, or an old sign.

Postcard invitations, mailed to **every** address within the neighborhood boundary, included residential, business, and faith-based communities. Posters were placed in community businesses, organizations, and community gathering spaces. Outreach materials were translated into the identified languages spoken in the neighborhood.

Transportation, interpretation and child care were standard offerings to encourage participation. As further incentive, we highlighted a free raffle drawing on the invitation.

We identified and connected with long-time residents and elders in the community to describe our event and respond to any questions.. In addition to scheduled speakers, we also showcased local talent. For example, at one history storytelling a neighborhood elder read one of her poems. An open forum, inviting others to share a story, followed featured storytellers.

Reviews and photographs were posted on our website, with highlights published in an Inspirational Guide, made available to the entire neighborhood.

Sample: History Storytelling Program from Overlook Neighborhood

## ***Overlook History Storytelling***

**Saturday, October 20, 2007 - Kaiser Town Hall Ballroom**

### **Welcome**

### **Storytellers**

We are here today to hear the stories, experiences, and memories from neighbors who have lived and worked in the Overlook neighborhood. Several people have volunteered to share a piece of history connected with the Overlook neighborhood. Each storyteller will speak for 5-10 minutes.

### **Ole' Time Fiddle Performance by Neighborhood Elder**

### **Open History Storytelling**

Following the scheduled storytellers, there will be an opportunity for audience members to speak as well. The stories about the history of Overlook we heard today or the questions below may spark memories or experiences that you have had. You are encouraged to share your own piece of Overlook history.

*What would you like people who are new to your neighborhood to know about its history?*

*What stories do you want to pass on to future generations about the Overlook neighborhood?*

*When you reflect on the time you have lived or worked in Overlook neighborhood, what has inspired you the most?*

### **Neighborhood Announcements & Invitations**



N Killingsworth Street

What do you want future generations to know about the history of the Overlook neighborhood?

## *Overlook History Storytelling*

Overlook neighbors are invited to listen and learn about the history of the neighborhood told by the people who lived and worked in it.

**Location:** Kaiser Town Hall Ballroom at 3704 N Interstate Avenue

**Date:** Saturday, October 20, 2007

**Time:** 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Transportation and interpretation provided upon request, with 7 days notice. Wheelchair accessible.

Free refreshments and childcare provided.

RSVP to [info@ourunitedvillages.org](mailto:info@ourunitedvillages.org) or 503-546-7499.

If you have a story you would like to share, please call ahead to 503-546-7499.



Swan Island 1920

 Printed on recycled paper

What do you want future generations to know  
about the history of the Overlook?

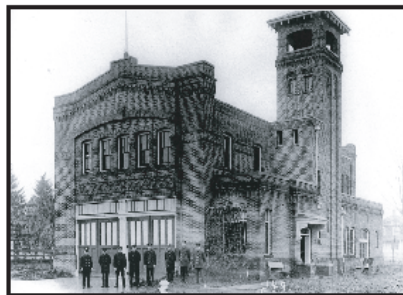
# *Overlook History Storytelling*

Overlook neighbors are invited to listen  
and learn about the history of the  
neighborhood told by the people who  
lived and worked in it.

Kaiser Town Hall Ballroom  
3704 N Interstate Avenue  
Saturday, October 20, 2007  
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM



N Killingsworth Street



Interstate Firehouse



Swan Island 1920

To RSVP, or if you have stories to share, please call 503-546-7499.