



Seattle is in the MIX

COPY: lisette austin PHOTOS: kimi kawabori

The girl with dark ringlets and olive skin pushed her way through the crowded room of adults and children. She ran excitedly to her blond mother and started tugging on her arm, nearly upsetting her plate of food. "Mom! Mom!" she said, eyes wide and face beaming, "Everyone here is mixed like me!"

In a city where nearly 1 in 6 newborns are multiracial, one might assume that she wouldn't be so surprised to discover others like herself. But until recently, there had been no established meeting ground for multiracial Seattle-ites and their families, leaving many feeling isolated. That hole has now been filled by two Puget Sound area organizations: Multiracial & Interracial eXperience (MIX) and miXed at the University of Washington. Both organizations, started with MAVIN Foundation, are social and action-oriented groups comprised of multiracial individuals, interracial couples, and transracial adoptees, and operate with the primary mission of providing a safe community that will support those who live beyond traditional racial boundaries.

MIX

MIX was founded this past February when Lisette Austin, a new mother in an interracial marriage, contacted MAVIN Foundation hoping to find a support group for families like hers. Shocked that there was no existing group, MAVIN offered to help her start one, and MIX was born. Since its small inaugural winter meeting, the group has grown to include 55 students, parents, young adults and children who meet once a month to socialize and discuss relevant issues.

MIX topics have included parenting mixed-race children, transracial adoption, multiracial identity, and navigating tensions between racial communities. Members are brainstorming ways to become a visible part of Seattle's cultural landscape. Initial ideas include speaking in

schools, participating in charity events, and hosting multiracial conferences. The group has also spent time simply getting to know one another through summer barbecues, field trips to art openings, and potlucks in members' homes.

miXed

A coterie of multiracial and transracially adopted students came together during the University of Washington's winter quarter to form the school's first organization celebrating the mixed-race experience. Founded by David Martos and fellow students and MAVIN staffers Kimi Kawabori and Yasmine Tarhouni, miXed had an eventful start. In its rookie year, the organization boasted over 100 members, recruited over 150 marrow donors as part of MAVIN's MatchMaker Bone Marrow Project, and convinced the UW's administration and Ethnic Cultural Center to fund seven members to fly out to the 6th Pan Collegiate Conference on the Mixed Race Experience in Ithaca, NY. MiXed rounded out the year with several speakers and workshops of national renown. This coming year, miXed is poised to continue its momentum, as it plays host to the 7th Pan Collegiate Conference from April 4-6, 2003.

Nothing speaks more to these groups' successes than the enthusiasm of that little girl tugging on her mother's sleeve. For a segment of people who have often felt battered by the country's divisive racial storms, it is indeed exciting to find a haven where they can feel accepted, understood and at home.

For more information about MAVIN Foundation's two community organizations, visit www.mavinfoundation.org/mix.html and www.mavinfoundation.org/mixed.html.