

Detroit organizations to hold open soccer tournament

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By Ali Harb



DETROIT — Community organizations will hold a soccer tournament during National Welcoming Week, which celebrates diversity and immigrants' contributions.

The event, which will take place at Clark Park in Southwest Detroit on Sept. 13, is organized by Global Detroit and Welcoming Michigan. Teams and players of all ages and backgrounds are invited to register for the contest. No professional experience is required to participate.

The competition will be in futsal, a form of indoor soccer with five-player teams in a field the size of a basketball court. Games will be played over two 10-minute halves.

It will be Detroit's second Welcoming Games. Last year's tournament was in standard soccer.

Raquel Garcia Andersen, director of partnerships and community outreach at Global Detroit, said it is easier to organize amateur futsal teams, which opens the door for greater participation.

"One of the goals of the Welcoming Games is that many different people intermingle and have good conversations," she said. "We know that happens around something fun."

She added that the international nature of soccer also conveys the ideals of diversity in the event.

"All ages and skill levels are welcome to join in the day's activities," global Detroit said in a statement. "The tournament is friendly— so if you've never played futsal before, or even soccer, this is a perfect opportunity for you."

The Arab American News will be fielding a staff team.

Soccer is a popular sport in the Arab American community, which boasts several amateur and semi-professional teams.

To participate in the Welcoming Games call or email Andersen at:

raquel@globaldetroit.com;

313-595-6492.

Detroit, whose Tigers, Red Wings, Pistons and Lions play top tier traditional north American sports (baseball, hockey, basketball and football), is also trying to break into the world of professional soccer. From 1978 to 1980, the Detroit Express played at the Pontiac Silverdome in the now-defunct North American Soccer League. A later incarnation played in the American Soccer League from 1981 to 1983, when the ASL folded.

The Detroit City Football Club, founded in 2012, plays in the fourth division of U.S. soccer, but is trying to move up the ladder in order to eventually play Major League Soccer.