How you are helping more newcomers become citizens

Recently, The Boston Globe ran a story saying more than half of immigrants in Massachusetts are citizens, which is greater than the national average of 45 percent. As a supporter of The Immigrant Learning Center, you are part of this story.

The ILC sponsors a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens once a year. You can see video and photos from past ceremonies on our website.

Many students come to The ILC with the dream of becoming citizens. The free English and Citizenship Classes are important steps toward realizing that dream. In this month's newsletter, I'm sharing some stories of students who are grateful and proud to say they are U.S. citizens.

Thank you for your continued support.

Diane Portnoy
President and CEO, The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.

Family man

Like so many of his countrymen, Charite's home was destroyed in the massive earthquake in Haiti. He came to the U.S. in 2002 and enrolled in The ILC the same year.

He moved in with his son and was determined to become a citizen so he could bring other members of his family to safety in the U.S.

In 2012, after completing The ILC's Citizenship Class, he achieved his goal and took the Oath of Allegiance at Faneuil Hall.
American encore

Juan was at an age when many people consider retirement. He owned a cattle and horse ranch in El Salvador and was ready to pass it on to his adult son. Juan also has three young children and was concerned for their future. Jobs are hard to come by in El Salvador, and gangs called “maras” sometimes threaten public safety.

In 2007, Juan left the ranch in his eldest son's hands and came to the United State to start the second chapter of his life. Last summer, his three youngest children joined him and they are now enrolled in third, fifth and seventh grade.

Juan studies English at The ILC and works part time at the recycling center. He also took advantage of the Citizenship Class. In December 2012, he passed the citizenship exam. Very proud of his achievement, when asked why he wants to be a citizen, his first answer is, “I want to vote for the U.S. President.”

Laughing at adversity

Nicole came to the U.S. from Haiti in 2005. Because she knew no English, she would laugh when people tried to talk to her. She understood that learning English was no laughing matter, and she joined The ILC’s Literacy Program in 2009. Now, she can understand, speak and write in English. If she laughs when you speak to her, it's because she thinks you are funny.

In 2012, she passed the U.S. citizenship exam. Nicole acknowledges all the help she has received saying, “This country and the school give me so many opportunities,” and she wants to give back. Her next goal is to become a nursing assistant so she can work in a nursing home and help others in need.

About Us

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, MA, is a not-for-profit organization that helps immigrants and refugees become successful workers, parents and community members through direct service programs and public education. Our direct service program provides free year-round English classes to immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston. The ILC further supports immigrants through the Public Education Institute, which informs Americans about the economic and social contributions of immigrants in our society. For more information visit http://www.ilctr.org.