New American Stories

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Proud to be an American

Recently, I had the honor of speaking at the third annual new citizen swearing-in ceremony sponsored by The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. in Malden. It is always inspiring to see the faces of new Americans beaming with pride after years of hard work and sacrifice to become U.S. citizens. You can see photos of that day on Flickr.

On their journey to becoming Americans, many immigrants and refugees come to The ILC to learn English and to study for the citizenship exam. Below are stories of two such journeys made possible by supporters like you.

Thank you for your continued support.

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

Van was one of the 97 proud new citizens sworn in on October 24. Her journey began in 1996 when she married her American husband. They would see each other only on his trips to visit her in Vietnam until 2009 when her visa came through, and she and their son and daughter could finally move to the U.S.

Van studied some English while in Vietnam in preparation for moving here, but that head start was not enough for her to really function in her new home. So, she studied English at The Immigrant Learning Center from 2010 to 2011 and took the Citizenship Class in 2013. The school became such an important part of her life that she stayed on as a volunteer in the Literacy Program after completing her classes.

Van's son is now a freshman in college, and her 15-year-old daughter is enrolled in high school. They are both very proud of their mom becoming a U.S. citizen.

Antonio

Antonio left the political upheaval of Haiti behind when he moved to Florida in 2004. He lived among a large Haitian community while working in hotel housekeeping and got by speaking mostly Creole.

Following advice from friends about better jobs and educational opportunities in Massachusetts, Antonio moved to Malden in 2011. Eager to improve, he enrolled in English classes at The Immigrant Learning Center, became a certified nursing assistant (CNA), and in April he became a U.S. citizen.

Ironically, Antonio had worked as an immigration inspector in Haiti. Perhaps seeing all those travelers from around the world peaked his wanderlust. He is most excited about the ease of travel that his new citizenship affords him and plans to visit Israel soon.

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.