

the Lantern

Meeting Students' Needs through Advocacy

by Mary Martens, Sister of Charity (BVM) and Presentation Lantern Tutor

The Presentation Lantern Center (PLC) strives daily to live out its mission of offering hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy for adult immigrants. Hospitality helps create this place of safety and mutual respect. Educational opportunities for improving English or preparing for the citizenship test encourage confidence. Advocacy addresses the vulnerability felt by newcomers unfamiliar with navigating systems and daily life activities we take for granted.

In providing advocacy, the PLC staff and volunteer tutors are resource people who use their positions of influence to ease the transition to American culture and customs.

A phone call from the PLC staff to the Des Moines immigration office resolves the problem of a husband and wife with separate appointments on two consecutive days by rescheduling both for the same day. A request to the Archdiocese of Dubuque brings professional advice for a legal issue, and occasionally some financial assistance for a medical need. Sometimes a tutor can accompany a student without a car to an appointment. This is advocacy with a personal touch.

However, dealing with the U.S. immigration system which impacts millions of immigrants throughout the country is more complicated. For almost 50 years the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) has been advocating at this level. NFWM is a faith-based organization committed to justice for and empowerment of farm workers, especially those who harvest by hand the food for our tables.

The immediate employer holds power over how these farm workers are treated. Where growers are fair and respectful of employees, everyone wins. Ultimately the consumer benefits with safe, responsibly-grown food. Where justice is lacking, NFWM brings the advocacy of some two dozen organizations, mostly Protestant churches and Catholic religious congregations. Their influence can be powerful and persuasive on behalf of immigrants.

Twice each year the NFWM board meets to mobilize organizational support for a worker-led campaign in a local area. Justice issues have

included substandard housing for Guestworker visa holders, wage theft from workers, pesticide exposure, lack of safety precautions and lack of medical help for illness and injury at work. Women suffer harassment and assaults, and workers are threatened with job loss for any complaints or efforts to organize.

However, improvement in work conditions and wages has occurred through the Fair Food Program. Initiated by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "fair food" is expanding beyond Florida. Major fast food vendors, with the exception of Wendy's, pay one penny per pound more for tomatoes and agree to a code of conduct in their supply chains to eliminate abuses in the fields.

In a country sorely divided about immigration today, many immigrants live with anxiety about their future. The Lantern Center and the National Farm Worker Ministry stand in support of immigrants who come here seeking security and a better life, just as our ancestors did. One-on-one efforts at the Center and systemic change efforts by NFWM have resulted in success stories about how advocacy achieves positive results.

"What country are you from?" is the question. "This one!" they reply. Right and bottom, our most recent citizens.



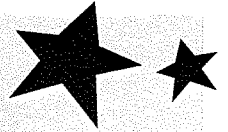
Tim Moothart, Board President and Tutor, studying English with one student who works on a farm. Below, the whole family are now citizens, after four trips



to Des Moines! Sign the enclosed petition to tell DBQ officials to become a "City for Citizenship." See article on p. 2.

LANTERN CENTER

Welcome



by Sarah Gieseke,
Former Executive Director

Editors note: We wish Sarah Gieseke well as she returns to Denver, Colorado, and advocates for immigrants there. We will miss her passion to serve immigrants and volunteers here in Dubuque.

What says "welcome"? When we say we welcome the stranger, or welcome people who are "different" or fall "outside the norm" of the "rest of us" would a better way to think of it, be 'to offer belonging' or 'inclusion' instead of 'offering welcome'? Sometimes welcome suggests that the other is here temporarily, while you are here permanently. **Hospitality**, though so important, also could stir a feeling in us of "I must be hospitable because you are temporary, you are a guest, since this is my home." When we say these words is our intention to make our actions (of welcome, of hospitality) a permanent way of being? Are first-generation or second generation immigrants really a part of *this* community? I dare not say "our" community or "our" country to leave out those who may feel like my "our" leaves out them.

Language is important. Often the language we use reinforces feelings or perpetuates belief systems. In U.S. history, we have had to change language to to become more inclusive, and better humans to fellow humans. Instead of the disabled, we now say "people with physical challenges", putting the people first. This is a good change.

God knows I am not perfect. And so do my parents, my co-workers, and my friends! But the point I think is, that we keep on learning how our language/actions affect others to inflict less wounds and impart more goodness.

So, the next time you say "where are you from?" to someone with a different skin tone than you, replace that with perhaps "How's your day?" The next time you want to honk at someone for not knowing how to drive in Dubuque, perhaps think that instead they just need some grace and a little kindness. Be well, Lantern friends.

Dear Reader: \$15 for 15?

I was inspired by an article in the November 2017 newsletter titled "Why Sharon believes in the Lantern Center". It stated that Sharon and her husband Steve have given a regular contribution to the Lantern Center every month since April 2008 in order to help "keep the lights on". My wife Mary and I have decided to do the same after the center's Development Committee recommended the "15 for 15" idea.

We started giving \$15 per month to the Lantern Center in recognition of its 15 years of service to adult immigrants in our area. Starting in November 2018 we will increase that to \$16 per month in recognition of the center's 16th year. We see this as one small way we can support the good work that the staff and volunteers do to make a difference in the lives of newcomers to our area trying to make a better life for themselves and their family.

Why not join us and start a regular monthly donation to the Presentation Lantern Center? You can arrange with your bank, credit union or credit card provider to make the donation automatically each month. Or, check the monthly pledge box on the donation envelope enclosed. Coming soon the Lantern Center will provide a "Donation Button" on its website which will be another easy way to make a contribution. Join us, it feels good!

Tim Moothart, Tutor

★ Did You Know?

- Presentation Lantern Center has only three individuals/couples that give a monthly pledge
- A little from your account each month, set up as an automatic payment, is convenient and easy to plan for financially, versus one or two larger gifts in the year
- Pledged donations are gifts that non-profits can count on, that ease budgeting challenges

Our Goal: 55/\$15 for 15

By December 31, 2018...

If 55 donors make a monthly pledge of \$15/month for one year, this will generate \$10,000.

Will you pledge \$15/month to Presentation Lantern Center in honor of our 15th anniversary?

★ How to Donate

- Fill out enclosed donation envelope, mark "Pledge," indicate the amount, date you plan to send, and send check monthly
- Call your bank to set up automatic payments directly to the Lantern Center's account
- Call Sara Millhouse, Business Coordinator, for assistance at (563) 557-7134

Thank you!

A City for Citizenship

Part three, in a series of three articles
by Sarah Gieseke, Former Executive Director

Cities for Citizenship (C4C) is a national initiative launched in 2014. Its aim is to encourage municipalities to support existing citizenship programs, and establish support for new programs, by working hand in hand with civil society. C4C is chaired by three mayors including Bill de Blasio (New York City), Rahm Emmanuel (Chicago) and Eric Garcetti (Los Angeles).

Thus far, there are 66 cities in the United States who have become, individually, Cities for Citizenship. The initiative is supported by respected organizations like the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Partnership for New Americans. Citibank is a corporate partner.

Why is there a need for such an approach? Well, studies show there are 8.8 million legal permanent residents in the United States who are eligible for citizenship and not applying. The English language, and lack of knowledge about the process and benefits of citizenship are considerable hurdles. The premise is that through creating better pathways to citizenship, immigrants are not only helped, but studies show that local economies improve. Naturalized citizens realize 8-11% higher earnings per year (that is, \$3,200) than permanent residents. Home ownership increases, and higher income means more taxes are collected by cities and counties. One study projects that the U.S. could see an increase in G.D.P. by \$37-52 billion if it invested in its legal permanent residents.

The city of Chicago partners, for example, with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and local libraries to increase citizenship applications. There is no reason why Dubuque cannot and should not do the same. Our local resources include the Presentation Lantern Center, Northeast Iowa Community College, local libraries and churches who could all work together with local government to increase citizenship. The need is real. In Dubuque, Jackson and Delaware counties alone, a University of Southern California study has found 447 people are eligible for citizenship and not applying. Approximately 41% of these individuals are from European countries, 7% are from Asian countries, and the remaining 50% are from various countries of origin. Surrounding counties in the tri-state region have over 1,000 more such individuals. **Can you return the enclosed form in the envelope provided, to sign the petition that Presentation Lantern center will be presenting to the City of Dubuque and the County of Dubuque?** Please also check the box if you have interest in attending the city/county meeting where C4C will be placed on the agenda.

Secondarily, can you write or call your local elected representatives to indicate your support for Dubuque as a City for Citizenship? Please bring this initiative up as you talk to candidates in preparation for the November elections.

Since Presentation Lantern Center opened its doors in 2002, we have now helped 78 people become citizens. Let's dream and make 78 into 447.



SCHMID INNOVATION CENTER
900 Jackson Street
Suite LL5-1
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

The Presentation Lantern Center is a drop-in center offering hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants, especially women, who are striving to better their lives. Sponsored by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, Iowa, the center is a non-profit organization.

HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Tuesday, Thursday
1:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Closed annually in August

Contact us at

(563) 557-7134
thelanterncenter@gmail.com

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