



# the Lantern

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A newsletter of the Presentation Lantern Center

## The Joys of a Strong, Diverse Community

by Katherine Fischer

Reprinted with permission from the *Telegraph Herald*.

**“You think you deserve this? No, kiddo, you just got lucky. You owe the world!”**

Thus began dad’s lecture about being born stateside with all its privilege. A first generation American, dad was aware of the arduous journey his mother and grandparents made in leaving Garmisch, Germany (later called Garmisch-Partenkirchen).

Dad claimed Grandma Kunigunde was a belly dancer in the Black Forest. (Mom corrected his accented syllable revealing Kuni was a folk ballet dancer.) She married Joseph, stable man for a Bavarian beer baron. Joseph tended horses that hauled kegs of beer to local biergartens.

When American Fred Miller visited his German baron buddy, he marveled at the conditions of the stable. He offered Joseph a job as stable master for Miller Beer. One “ja bitte” later, Joseph, Kunigunde and baby daughter Margaret ended up in Milwaukee.

Urgroßvater Joseph fed the horses, picked their hooves and brushed them before mucking out stalls. Kuni took in laundry. None of them spoke English.

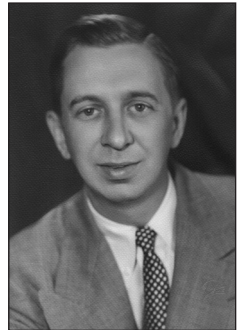
This is the part where dad punctuated, “You didn’t earn citizenship. You just got lucky!”

*Right: Kuni holding Norman, her little American grandson and winner of the 1916 Milwaukee baby contest! Far right: Great grandmother, Kunigunde Schaefer, far left in black dress.*

*Photo restoration provided by Tom Bradley.*



I started teaching at Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque’s Millwork District 10 years ago. Sponsored by the Sisters of the Presentation, Lantern offers hospitality, English and citizenship lessons and advocacy for immigrants and their children.



*Katherine Fischer and her first-gen father Norman Fischer*

Having logged more than 40 years teaching college and high school English, I discovered I had never really taught English. Creative writing, composition and literature, sure — but not English.

At Lantern I’ve rubbed elbows with immigrants from Venezuela, Spain, Colombia, Guatemala, Mali, Ethiopia, Egypt, Mongolia, Mexico, Iran, India, South Korea, Brazil, China, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Haiti and Ukraine — just a handful of the 85 countries served. Their stories vary from having married an American to pursuing better education to escaping abuse and death to fleeing from terrorists to seeking freedom to serving as Catholic priests and more.

*(continued on back cover)*



# What is DACA? ★★

DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Those protected under DACA are referred to as DREAMers, referencing the DREAM Act, which has received bipartisan support for many years but has still not been passed. This leaves half a million adults in constant fear.

DACA was created in June 2012 to protect from deportation eligible adults brought to the United States as babies or children. For their bravery in stepping out of the shadows, they are able to apply and pay for a work permit once every two years. They receive a Social Security number which is valid for work purposes only. No government benefits are allowed, even though they pay taxes into the Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid system. As of 2017, DACA was ended for new participants. Only those who applied during those initial five years have since been able to renew their work permits.

DACA is not a green card, and at present, there is no possibility for U.S. citizenship. Participants are NOT eligible for federal financial aid, nor most scholarships, so paying for college is extraordinarily difficult. DACA participants have never been eligible for Medicaid. As of 2024, they were finally eligible to buy plans on HealthCare.gov. However, 19 states including Iowa revoked their ability to do so in 2025.

**We are proud that 14 DACA recipients in the tri-state area earned scholarships through us since 2019!** DACA renewals cost \$605 every two years. The Lantern Center offers scholarships toward renewal fees, books or tuition. Assistance can also be used for people who would be enrolled in DACA if enrollment were still open.



## One DREAMer's Perspective

*"We're told our whole lives to work hard, do well in school, keep a squeaky-clean record, work a lot, pay taxes, be the bigger person, be patient, be kind. We DO that. I have done that my whole life."*

*I have my CNA license, get excellent grades, I follow the rules and abide by the laws. I am in college, but because I'm locked out of the health insurance market and because I am not allowed to take out student loans, continuing on to get the nursing degree of my dreams at NICC nearly impossible. The remaining cost is \$24,000, making it impossible to do without loans...not to mention the unaffordable cost of private insurance, mandatory for clinicals. Taking out student loans is something many bemoan and most take for granted, yet I would be grateful to have that privilege. So, my dreams and career in healthcare must be put on hold.*

*I was raised in the United States, the only country that is truly home to me. Despite that, my future and the future of hundreds of thousands like me is constantly uncertain. There are only so many broken promises a person can take. We get our hopes up when we see good things in the news and feel hopeful something might change, then those hopes are shattered just hours or days later.*

*Every time we turn in our renewal paperwork, we worry we could face denial for any reason or no reason. We must keep trying to prove ourselves worthy, but nothing seems to help, and that really hurts. I sometimes think, 'What do you want from me, what more could I possibly do?'"*

— Wendy, Local DACA "DREAMer"



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## MISSION

The Presentation Lantern Center offers hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants who are striving to better their lives.

## HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:  
10 AM - 3 PM  
Tuesday and Thursdays: 1 to 7 PM

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## CONTACT US

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**[info@thelanterncenter.org](mailto:info@thelanterncenter.org)**

 Visit us at [thelanterncenter.org](http://thelanterncenter.org)

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Interested in becoming a volunteer?  
Call or text Sue Ellis at 563-557-7134,  
or email [info@thelanterncenter.org](mailto:info@thelanterncenter.org).





# Friends of The Lantern Center

We are truly grateful to our community for their incredible support!  
Gifts received January 1 - April 8, 2025.

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2. Become a tutor! No prior educational or multilingual experience is needed. To get started, call or text Sue Ellis at 563-557-7134, or email [info@thelanterncenter.org](mailto:info@thelanterncenter.org).

3. Donate a WISH LIST item like coffee, gift cards, stamps, herbal or green tea, disinfecting wipes or paper towels. Visit our web site under **WAYS TO GIVE** for a complete listing.

## Misha Grateful for U.S. Citizenship!

With steadfast guidance from long-time tutor Jim Heinle, Misha proudly took his oath of citizenship earlier this year. Originally from Ukraine, Misha is the 124<sup>th</sup> student to successfully complete their journey to citizenship with guidance from The Lantern Center! His wife Inna, pictured here, is also a U.S. citizen. The center maintains a 100% success rate for our citizenship students!

Misha said, "I am very glad and satisfied with the fact that the Lantern Center helped me. Thank you to my teacher and to everyone who helped me. Citizenship is very important to me. My whole life is ahead of me. I am very happy! I love the United States of America!"



# Lighting the Lantern Shines Bright!

The Lantern Center is truly grateful to all of our guests who joined us for an inspirational evening at our annual Lighting the Lantern event on March 15.

Guests filled the sold-out ballroom and enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres while listening to the musical talents of Steve and Terry Slade, Terry Dillon and Masa Iwasaki. Our program featured a dynamic and inspirational keynote by Alex Baum, Director of Advocacy, Data and Learning at the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. Other featured speakers included Carmen Hernandez, PBVM, Megan Ruiz and emcee Heather Trees.

Co-chairs Lisa Ruppel and Mary Klein led the planning team and Mary also prepared and donated over 500 desserts with the use of Convivium Urban Farmstead's kitchen!

## Thank you Lighting the Lantern Sponsors!

### \$5,000 - Shining Star

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Dubuque Flower Company,  
Joan Johnson & Katherine  
Toops (centerpieces)  
Divine Word College (flags)



## The Joys of a Strong, Diverse Community

*(continued from front cover)*

### Every person I've met has longed for a better life in the United States.

I've shared coffee in their apartments, met their children, laughed together over oddities in English, discussed pop culture television, mourned deaths of parents back home, shared holidays and quizzed them on driver's license regulations.

They work in our community as dishwashers, executives, mechanics, engineers, factory workers, assemblers, cafeteria servers, cooks, waiters, waitresses, hotel housekeepers, artists, CNAs, nurses, farmers, mothers and fathers.

One student joined me on a tour of the Dickeyville (Wis.) Grotto. Reverently marveling at statues and bits of glass trinkets embedded in the walls, she admired the spirit that built it.

After one of my students got lost downtown, we took a walking tour stopping in the Museum of Art, Outside the Lines, Yarn Soup, Jitterz, Carnegie Stout — places I knew would welcome her. Through her, I gained a fresh appreciation of our town.

I've become acquainted with Ramadan, Enkutatash (Ethiopian New Year), Malian Tiguadege Na, rice farming, housing animals on the main floor of one's house, the effects of

colonialism (paved roads but also exploitation and suppression of native languages), differences in race relations and international politics.

Dyed in the wool Midwesterner, I love this place we call home. But how boring and tiny life would be were I restricted to this corner. Lantern Center immigrants expand my understanding. I come to know life from people who are very different from me. I gain views of the United States from outside the country.

Only one generation separates me from being an immigrant. Were Dad alive, he would see how lucky I am now to be in the company of these good folks who make our community and our country better.

### I teach them English. They teach me the world.

*Right: Katherine has been a tutor at The Lantern Center for over 10 years. She is pictured here with an Ethiopian student.*

