

CONNECTS

CASEY

FALL 2003
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: Helping Immigrant and Refugee Families Not Just Survive, but Thrive; Influence of National Family Week Increasing; Shedding Light on the Charitable Giving Act; Resource Corner; INSITES



SUSE FITZHUGH

HELPING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES NOT JUST SURVIVE, BUT THRIVE

“What I like about America is that the government at least helps you,” a 31-year-old Oromo woman says about life after her immigration to the United States from an East African refugee camp. She complains though, that she is not treated with respect because she cannot speak English well. She worries about learning the language, adapting to a new culture, and her children. “It is difficult to parent here,” she says. “They are much more American than we are, and it is difficult to get them to listen to us and to value our culture.”

One woman’s frustrations are echoed throughout communities in the United States with a high influx of immigrant populations hailing from Southeast Asia to Latin America. One in five children in the United States is the child of an immigrant,

making them the fastest growing segment of the population under age 18. As an organization dedicated to improving children’s lives, virtually every facet of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s work is touched—and enriched—by the challenge of serving immigrant families effectively and maximizing their unique strengths. In efforts ranging from child welfare to health to system reform to community mobilization, the Foundation and its grantees are grappling with these issues and putting in place targeted strategies.

According to the National Survey of America’s Families conducted by the Urban Institute, “Immigrants play a crucial role in the U.S. economy, comprising almost one in eight workers and one in four low-wage workers. They fill critical jobs and are the backbone of many industries.” While many immigrants are low-income, “prosperous immigrant communities represent

untapped markets for a wide range of businesses, including banks and retail stores, and underutilized sources of voluntarism or other forms of civic engagement,” the study notes. Many immigrants also bring advanced degrees and bilingual skills.

While the sheer number of dollars immigrant workers send back home demonstrates their work ethic and earning potential—total remittance flows nearly doubled from \$34 billion in 1990 to \$66 billion in 2000 by conservative World

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[Vietnamese teenagers tutor younger children at the Van-Lang Vietnamese Cultural School in Seattle/White Center.](#)

INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK INCREASING

If you wandered the grounds of the new Riverfront Library in Yonkers, N.Y., on November 8, you would have seen parents, children, and members of the community trying out aerobics, dance, karate, and yoga classes; perusing donated books; and learning about cooking in healthy eating

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701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Phone: 410.547.6600
Fax: 410.547.6624
www.aecf.org

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Kristin Coffey
Copyeditor

Kathryn Shagas Design
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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

workshops. You would have come across parents and kids building birdhouses, learning about bike and automobile safety, and enjoying a free and nutritious lunch together. You also would have found local leaders, town councilmen, the mayor, and state representatives meeting with members of neighborhood groups and affirming their commitment to policies and programs that support the needs of families and communities.

The much anticipated fifth annual Family Day celebration in Yonkers was expected to draw an even greater crowd than the 2,000 participants and 200 volunteers who helped make last year's event such a success. And it is just one of more than 170 events taking place on village greens and at state capitols around the country during National Family Week, November 23–29, and throughout the month, with the goal of building strong children, families, and communities by honoring the individuals, businesses, organizations, and policymakers that help them thrive.

“Ours is a one-day event where parents and children come to have a good time with each other and learn about family-friendly businesses, programs, and services in the area that they can use,” explained Lorelei Vargas, director of Policy, Planning, and Research at the Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial, the lead agency for the Yonkers Early Childhood Initiative, which organizes the event. “It’s also a time for local and state leaders to get a grassroots look at issues that affect people and take part in



JOAN JENNINGS

Parents and children at the Greyston Childcare Center in Yonkers sang the national anthem at the opening ceremony of last year's Family Day.

conversations about what makes strong families and strong communities.”

National Family Week has been sponsored for more than three decades by the Alliance for Children and Families, a Milwaukee-based organization that represents child- and family-serving organizations working with nearly 8 million people in 6,700 communities. With Casey Foundation support, National Family Week has grown over the past three years from a small program involving fewer than 50 members into a nationwide happening involving 20,000 people.

Thanks to partnerships forged by the Alliance and the Foundation, an increasing number of national nonprofit organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, American Association of Retired Persons, National League of Cities, and YMCA of America, also are promoting National Family Week and encouraging their local chapters and constituents to participate.

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SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE CHARITABLE GIVING ACT

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has been closely monitoring developments in proposed legislation designed to stimulate charitable giving through changes to the federal tax code. The Charitable Giving Act (HR 7), passed by the House in September, has received extensive media coverage and the attention of the philanthropic community because of its potential effect on private foundations and the many grantees that rely on their support.

After House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO) and Representative Harold Ford (D-TN) introduced the bill last May, Casey Foundation President Doug Nelson sent a letter to the Foundation's network of grantees, partners, and friends to clarify the details of the measure and the Foundation's position.

"It is certainly appropriate for Congress to encourage maximum, practical payouts by foundations, and to discourage excessive compensation for executives and trustees. However, the legislation, as proposed, may have unintended consequences beyond the worthy goals that Congress has anticipated," wrote Nelson.

The Charitable Giving Act attempts to increase the dollars going to grantees by excluding "administrative expenses" from the annual required payout of 5 percent of a private foundation's total assets. The Casey Foundation's main concern is that

the exclusion of these expenses might discourage some foundations from considering important grantee-supporting activities like technical and communications assistance, program evaluation, training, and leadership development.

For example, the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is distributed to thousands of grantees, child advocates, legislators, journalists, academics, and others to help them better understand the issues that have an impact on children's lives. The Foundation has been able to make resources go further by combining the KIDS COUNT grants with technical assistance and other types of direct staff support—costs that could be considered administrative in the new legislation.

While the Casey Foundation has a policy interest in this issue, planned spending will not be affected by this debate. Historically, the Foundation has paid out more than the required 5 percent, spending more than 7 percent in five of the past six years, and we estimate that the 2003 payout will be just as high.

The House Ways and Means Committee considered the issue of administrative expenses in a markup session of HR 7 in early September. Incorporating feedback from leaders in the nonprofit community, Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) amended the original legislation including a signifi-

cant compromise allowing expenses attributable to direct charitable activities, grant selection activities, grant monitoring, and administration activities to qualify toward the minimum 5 percent payout requirement.

Other key provisions of interest to private foundations, including measures to prevent excessive compensation for executives and trustees, were also passed. In addition, Rep. Thomas's version of HR 7 adjusts the excise tax on private foundations' net investment income and increases penalties for self-dealing violations.

The revised bill is expected to go before House and Senate conference committees along with the CARE Act, the Senate's counterpart to HR 7, before the end of the year. In addition to working out differences between the two bills, the committees must determine how the costs of proposed tax breaks included in HR 7—expected to reach \$12.7 billion over ten years—would be covered.

Regardless of how this issue is resolved, the Casey Foundation will work closely with grantees, consultants, co-investors, and strategic partners and continue its ongoing commitment to use the best combination of grants, technical assistance, and direct services to improve outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable kids and families.



LOUISVILLE HOSTS BOARD MEETING

Dana Jackson, Louisville *Making Connections* site coordinator, helped organize a site visit for the Casey Foundation Board of Trustees in August. The Board had the opportunity to meet with local officials, neighborhood leaders, and community residents. To Jackson's left, Kevin Fields with the Louisville Urban League; to her right, Joe Gliessner of New Directions Housing Corporation and Luckett Davidson of the Louisville Community Design Center.

HELPING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES NOT JUST SURVIVE, BUT THRIVE

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Bank estimates—many immigrant families are stymied from building on their assets by a lack of access to mainstream services and institutions. They also fall prey to predatory financial services and inflated fees for transactions that cut into the spending power of their hard-earned dollars.

Through the Foundation's Family Economic Success initiative, immigrant families learn to protect their assets and build strong financial futures for themselves and their children. "The problem is not just being able to get and keep a job, but having opportunities to move ahead with a career and build wealth," says Bob Giloth, the Foundation's director of Family Economic Success.

Denver, one of the cities in the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative, is attempting to create "hybrid neighborhoods in which the Spanish-speaking population can tap into the same resources as the Americans," notes Garland Yates, *Making Connections* site team leader for Denver. The site has forged a partnership with a credit union to provide financial services to the immigrant sector without the remittance fees that predatory lenders would charge. "With a checking or savings account, and less money lost to fees, they are able to save more and even send some home to their families," Yates notes.

The Hmong Educational Advancement (HEA) program in Wisconsin helps support the financial needs of Southeast Asian families in Milwaukee. Dao Veng, site coordinator for HEA, tells of two Hmong parents who had been paying to have their taxes prepared. After visiting HEA's Voluntary Income Tax Assistance center, they had their returns amended for the previous three years and were able to get more than \$3,400 in education credit for their two children attending college. "For many families, \$3,000 is enough for

a down payment on their first home—the first step toward asset building," notes Veng.

While some indicators of child well-being favor children of immigrant parents—more are being raised in two-parent families, for example—they are more than twice as likely as other children to be in poor health. *Covering Kids & Families*,

tuberculosis but eventually expanding to meet other family needs. The program started in Seattle and currently is being replicated in Boston, San Diego, and Washington, D.C. "We try to understand the particular culture and health beliefs of each ethnic group we work with," says Patrick Chaulk, MD, senior associate for health programs at the Foundation.

VIRTUALLY every facet of the Casey Foundation's work is TOUCHED—and ENRICHED—by the challenge of serving immigrant families effectively and maximizing their UNIQUE STRENGTHS.

an initiative of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, is designed to reduce the number of uninsured children and families by enrolling and retaining eligible children in the state's Medicaid health insurance program called RItE Care. The Central Falls project, one of three local project communities, offers a wide variety of social service programs specifically geared toward Latinos. The project uses multiple forms of bilingual and bicultural outreach, including Spanish language newspapers, radio call-in shows, and referral networks to dispel myths about eligibility requirements and increase the number of RItE Care applicants.

Another effort to improve health services for immigrant and refugee families is the Cultural Case Managers program developed by the Foundation. The program draws on data from the target population to design culturally acceptable approaches to services and care, focusing initially on

"We use the knowledge, talent, and skills within the community as part of a larger trust-building exercise."

Refugee families involved in the child welfare system also have special needs that too often aren't addressed. Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), a national program operated by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services, held a roundtable in July 2003 to help broaden collaboration among service providers and better support refugee children in public foster care. "The roundtable exposed national leaders in child welfare to the concerns of refugee community members and service providers, while giving refugee community leaders tools and strategies for working with their local child welfare systems," notes Kerry McCarthy, program coordinator of BRYCS.

RESOURCE CORNER

In Print

All publications listed below can be ordered from the Foundation website (www.aecf.org) or by calling our publications voice line at 410.223.2890, unless otherwise noted.

- **THE NEW NEIGHBORS: A USER'S GUIDE TO DATA ON IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. COMMUNITIES**—This guidebook was designed to help advocates, local policymakers, and program leaders identify immigrant populations in their local communities and take stock of their characteristics, contributions, and needs. *The New Neighbors*, prepared by the Urban Institute with support from the Casey Foundation, provides information from the U.S. Census and other sources to help address key questions about immigrants' adaptation to and involvement in local economies and social institutions.
- **VOICES FROM THE EMPOWERMENT ZONES: INSIGHTS ABOUT LAUNCHING LARGE-SCALE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION INITIATIVES**—This report, written by Janet Levy of the EZ/EC Foundation Consortium and Mark Joseph of Community Development Associates, offers an insider's look at what it's like living and working in seven Empowerment Zone communities. The report combines provocative insights and observations from residents with inspirational photos taken by young people in EZ/EC neighborhoods.
- **UPDATE: LATEST FINDINGS IN CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**—Designed for policymakers, advocates, clinicians, and anyone committed to the well-being of children, this quarterly bulletin is produced through a collabo-

ration between Rutgers University, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Casey Foundation. Each edition highlights an aspect of children's mental health, with findings based on a landmark national survey of over 8,000 youth in some 1,600 community mental health facilities. The Summer 2003 report focuses on adolescents living in residential care programs.

- **2003 KIDS COUNT AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND LATINO CHILDREN POCKET GUIDES**—These two new KIDS COUNT guides offer data on the economic, educational, and social well-being of minority children and highlight persistent gaps between minority children and non-Hispanic white children in the United States. Derived from the 2000 Census, these booklets provide a national overview, state-by-state data, and state rankings.
- **SHIFTING INTO GEAR: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CREATING A CAR OWNERSHIP PROGRAM**—One of the most persistent but often overlooked barriers to employment for low-income families is not having a car. The National Economic Development and Law Center published this resource with Casey Foundation support to help organizations interested in launching or improving car ownership programs for low-income communities. This report offers guidelines on program feasibility, design, and strategies as well as sample forms, surveys, and references.
- **NEW SONG ACADEMY**—This report by Prudence Brown and Leila Fiester presents a compelling portrait of education reform through the struggles and successes of the New Song Academy, an inner-city community school and Casey Foundation grantee. The report highlights the school's

achievements, challenges, and lessons learned about factors that support or undermine education in poor but revitalizing communities.

- **ADVOCASEY: SPRING 2003**—This issue of the Casey Foundation's periodical documenting programs that work for kids and families highlights challenges facing America's juvenile courts and corrections systems. In the opening essay, Foundation President Doug Nelson decries the trend toward "fad justice" for teens, and the magazine explores four crucial choices facing the juvenile justice field. Also included are stories tracking the progress of a juvenile detention reform effort in New Mexico and the success of Missouri's "small is beautiful" approach to youth corrections.

On the Web

www.gcir.org/aecf, a special portal to the website of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), offers a wealth of immigrant and refugee data at the international, state, and county levels as well as a newsletter, bibliography, and resources on everything from health, education, employment, and public benefits to leadership development. GCIR, which does not give grants but helps funding groups work together and better target their assistance to meet diverse immigrant and refugee needs, also offers a listserv highlighting new reports, policy updates, and key events.

The Casey Foundation has revamped and expanded a section of its website devoted to *Making Connections*, a multi-city, multiyear effort to help children by strengthening their families and neighborhoods. The site, www.aecf.org/mc, offers information, resources, and examples of what is working in *Making Connections* sites.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Phone: 410.547.6600
Fax: 410.547.6624
www.aecf.org

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INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK INCREASING
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This year, nearly 100 Alliance members and more than 70 local organizations are joining forces to provide fun and entertainment while connecting families to the resources they need and introducing them to community, school, and other local and state leaders. National Family Week also serves as a forum for political leaders and policymakers to underscore their commitment to helping families achieve the foundations of success through decent jobs, quality child care, transportation, education and training, affordable health care and housing, child abuse prevention and treatment, and school readiness.

Casey Foundation support also has enabled the Alliance to step up its outreach efforts, resulting in a 67 percent increase in media coverage from 2001–2002 and growing corporate sponsorship.

“In the past three years, we’ve been better able to help Alliance members form true partnerships with local nonprofits in order to plan truly meaningful events,” explained Paula Purcell, the Alliance’s director of Special Projects. “This enables them not only to create activities that bring families together, but also to educate them about what services are available in their communities and connect them with policymakers.”

For more information, go to www.nationalfamilyweek.org.



INSPIRATION BY EXAMPLE

Geoffrey Canada, noted author and activist and chief executive officer of the Harlem Children’s Zone, offered inspirational remarks at a recent gathering of 2003 honorees in the FAMILIES COUNT: National Honors Program, which recognizes community organizations doing an exemplary job of strengthening families and communities. Canada’s most recent book is *Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America*. The Harlem Children’s Zone, formerly known as Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families, is a 2001 FAMILIES COUNT honoree.

INSITES

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CLEARING A PATH TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Immigrant and refugee children need strong families and supportive communities just as desperately as those with American roots, but too often, critical bonds to both are broken in the transition from their homelands. For immigrant and refugee parents and caregivers, the right connections to economic opportunity, social support, and responsive services can mean the difference between barely surviving and providing a thriving and healthy upbringing for their children.

Across its range of programs and activity, the Casey Foundation is working to support efforts and organizations that help

immigrants and refugees participate fully in their communities, preserve their cultural values, and strengthen their assets. According to Irene Lee, senior associate for refugee and immigrant programs, the Foundation works broadly to foster three “pathways of connection” to strengthen and improve outcomes for immigrant families: ensuring that they have access to services and supports in their native language; providing more opportunities for them to become proficient in English; and helping them with issues related to legal status. The following stories illustrate model approaches to each of these pathways.

Immigrants need a working knowledge of the tax code and other financial systems in order to save and invest in their futures. These systems are difficult to negotiate even for English-speaking families, much less for those of other languages and cultures. To help immigrant families navigate the obstacles to one of the most important assets a family can have—its own home—*Making Connections* in Oakland provided the Lao Family Community Development Inc. with a planning grant to bring a Multilingual Homeownership Center (MHC) to residents of the San Antonio neighborhood. About half the population of the Lower San Antonio neighborhood, the target neighborhood for *Making Connections*, is made up of Asian and Latino immigrants.

Families receive guidance in purchasing a home at special workshops MHC holds twice a month. “Our staff support [families] from the very beginning, from collecting

Thy Lem a member of a Cambodian dance troupe performs at the grand opening of the Multilingual Homeownership Center in Oakland.



SARA HENDERSON

documentation to education and visiting the lender,” says Jacqueline Rickman, director of MHC.

Nai Saelee and Chery Cheung, two MHC housing counselors, describe their first successful closing on a home loan for an immigrant family. The Yao Fao Lee family had accumulated some savings and had steady employment, but was still stymied by language barriers. Saelee and Cheung processed the paperwork for the bank, scheduled an appointment with the lender, and worked in concert with the lender to help the family. “The family spoke Mien, and needed to have translation services throughout the entire process, from submission of the loan application to closing at title,” says Cheung of the procedure. This would have been virtually impossible without the assistance of their MHC counselors, who walked them through every step of the way.

The family received pre-approved financing, which went toward its purchase—a four-bedroom house in the Lower San Antonio neighborhood.

But MHC’s services don’t end after a home is purchased. In order for families to meet their financial obligations, post-purchase counseling is offered. After a sale is made and the families move in, Saelee and Cheung continue to advise them on their budget and basic home maintenance practices.

The Lees are one of 28 families who were able to become homeowners in Oakland and other cities since the opening of MHC, which also has refinanced a dozen homes.

Yet immigrant and refugee families still face major obstacles. The majority are employed in low-wage positions, with little chance to advance. “Education is a major obstacle in achieving homeownership because many people have not had formal education,” Rickman explains. Increasing the literacy level remains a critical challenge not only for the Asian immigrants in the Oakland *Making Connections* site, but in other cities across the nation.

Giving immigrant and refugee families more opportunities to learn English in order to bolster their employability is a key component of the Seattle/White Center *Making Connections* site’s workforce development strategy. With about 50 different first-languages spoken in the diverse neighborhoods of White Center/Boulevard Park, limited English proficiency is a significant barrier for many residents looking to secure jobs that will support their families.

In a series of neighborhood discussion sessions involving more than 250 immigrants and service providers in the Seattle/

Marian Fato attends a neighborhood discussion session in the Seattle/White Center area. Fato, who is Oromo, has taken ESL classes and is active in her community.

White Center area and culminating in a summit, participants put a high priority on improving their English proficiency in order to make them more employable, help them better adjust to American society, and improve their communication with their children.



In this class we can MEET
PEOPLE from different
countries, different CULTURES,
and different LANGUAGES.
And different AGES, too.

“Households are being taken over by our children because they have communication abilities in English that parents don’t have,” one Eritrean resident notes. Although research shows English language proficiency increases earning potential significantly and immigrants and refugees recognize the need to learn English to connect to services in the community and maintain solid relationships with their own children, they face many obstacles in attending English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Vicki Asakura, executive director for the Nonprofit Assistance Center, says work commitments, child care issues, and a long waiting list for state-funded ESL classes deter immigrant and refugee residents from enrolling. She also notes that many ESL classes funded by the state have been eliminated due to budget cuts.

To help fill the need for more classes, the Casey Foundation helped subsidize an ESL pilot program in partnership with the Refugee Federation Service Center. The pilot was carefully designed to address the obstacles to ESL services identified by the community and offer a program that is supportive of families and focused on helping people work toward secure and promising employment opportunities.

The class is tailored for a multilevel, multiethnic group of White Center adult residents who can form strong bonds across nationalities and foster the kinds of communication skills needed in today’s diverse workforce.

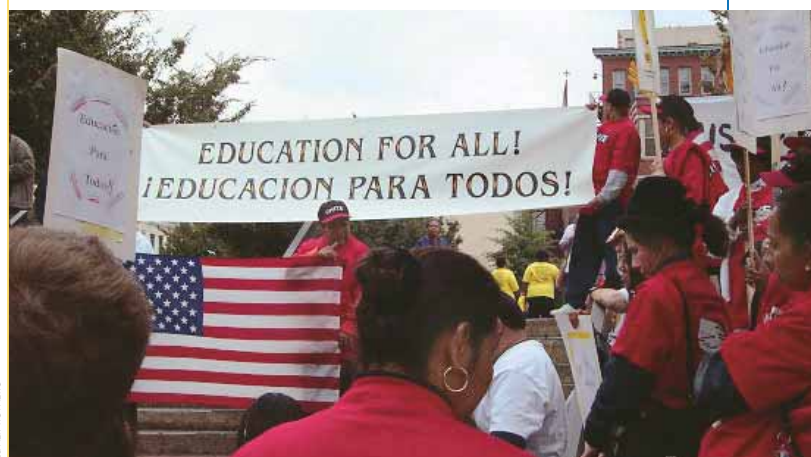
“In this class we can meet people from different countries, different cultures, and different languages. And different ages, too,” writes Rejad Islamicovic, a participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in an assignment for his ESL class. “It is very important just to talk in English.”

The curriculum is customized to meet the needs of each student and accommodate their schedules, and every student is offered an incentive payment based on attendance standards and course completion. The program also helps link participants with employment opportunities and helps in arranging child care, transportation, and legal services. Bilingual, bicultural representatives of the community who serve as program counselors have excellent access to community resources and have earned residents’ trust.

The Foundation’s objective to improve the odds for children through better family and community connections complements the values many ethnic groups bring. Immigrant and refugee families “have a natural focus on being family-centered, which matches the Foundation’s emphasis on family strengthening,” observes Theresa Fujiwara, local site coordinator for *Making Connections* in Seattle/White Center.

“Because of the class, my English is better,” writes Elsa Bokure from Eritrea. “I am communicating with my employer. After my ESL class, I passed the driver’s license test with better English. I drive back and forth to work myself... I talk with everybody at work, [even] the manager.”

Obando was a minor living alone in Texas when he and three friends were recruited to work in restaurants in other states. Each young man was promised \$20 for the road trip and then driven to different states. Two days later, Obando arrived in Maryland, where he knew no one. The restaurant owner paid the driver \$500 and immediately put Obando to work. For the next two weeks, he worked every day for



ELMER ROMERO

Banner displayed at a rally CASA de Maryland participated in reflects the goal of education for all, regardless of immigration status.

14–16 hours washing dishes and cutting vegetables. At night, Obando slept with other workers in a house behind the restaurant.

After two weeks, Obando wanted to quit because he had not been paid. After the employer refused to pay him, Obando called the police, who referred him to CASA de Maryland. After filing a lawsuit, CASA received a favorable settlement for Obando. In addition, CASA assisted him in becoming a ward of the state so that he could receive additional benefits, enrolling in high school, and applying for immigration relief. He now speaks perfect English and will graduate from high school next year.

Obando’s story is one of thousands that are left unheard. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees data show that immigration status plays a central role in keeping many undocumented immigrants captive to poverty, discrimination, and exploitation in the workforce. Organizations like CASA de Maryland Inc. give a voice to people like

Obando who have been marginalized simply because they are immigrants.

CASA's mission is to improve the quality of life and socio-economic well-being of the low-income Latino and immigrant community in the region. Through programs in many areas, including employment placement, women's empowerment, legal services, health promotion, education, and community organizing, many of the 225,000 Latinos who reside in Maryland, as well as immigrants from Africa and other areas, receive leadership skills needed to promote independence and self-sufficiency in their local communities.

"Our focus has evolved to providing a wide range of educational, organizing, and advocacy services designed to address the multiple conditions of poverty and disenfranchisement that control the lives of many Latino immigrants and refugees," says Gustavo Torres, executive director of CASA de Maryland.

One of CASA's objectives is to provide advocacy assistance and training to its members, encouraging community members to let their voices be heard. Participants work in teams to help support pro-immigrant legislation, including the driver's license bill, in-state tuition legislation, and increased funding for adult-education classes. "We are also actively working at the national level on several projects, including passing the Dream Act, which would grant legal residency status to immigrant youth who graduate from U.S. high schools and demonstrate good moral character," says Kim Propeack, advocacy director for CASA.

Steering young people toward positive activities by getting them interested and involved in the civic life of their communities is an important ingredient of the Foundation's family and neighborhood strengthening efforts. In Providence, *Making Connections* helped underwrite a bus trip for young people to participate in the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride October 4, a nationwide event in which buses from 80 cities converged in Washington, D.C., and New York City to raise awareness about immigrant rights.



JON SHARIN

Omar Luna, age 21 months, was one of 550 people from Providence and surrounding areas who participated in the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride. He is the son of *Making Connections* Local Site Coordinator Shannah Kurland.

The leadership and staff of several ethnically diverse organizations working with young people in Providence planned a series of educational activities around the event and defined a set of outcomes for participation, such as helping youth leaders communicate immigration policy issues to the broader community, ensuring that the local immigrant rights movement recognizes the power and visibility of youth activists, and sharing insights and information from the bus trip with the broader community of people involved in *Making Connections*.

This is just one example of the Providence site's intensive efforts to make sure immigrant resident voices are heard and play a critical role in setting and achieving results that will improve conditions for children and families. Making sure translation services are available at all meetings and translating all documents are a key part of this work, as is hiring staff that reflect the diverse community and can send a message to immigrant residents that their voices are important.

"We have begun to understand that it is not just about a language barrier," says Faith Bynoe, program assistant for *Making Connections* in Providence. "If we are truly going to mobilize the community, we must engender trust not just in *Making Connections* staff but in the entire process."

Adds Bynoe: "Whether they have been in Providence for a day or for their entire lives, it is through the voice of all residents that we can get to the results that the community identifies as vital to the life of Providence."

Making sure **TRANSLATION SERVICES** are available at all meetings and **TRANSLATING DOCUMENTS** are a key part of this work, as is **HIRING STAFF** that reflect the diverse community.