

# MCRC NOTICIAS



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## FLIGHT FROM TERROR TO SAFETY AND FREEDOM: A REFUGEE'S STORY



Nga Kinal

**Nga Kinal** remembers the terror of April 27, 1975 as if it were yesterday. On that frightening day, Nga, grasping only the hand of her nine-year old son and her purse, ran amid chaos to an overcrowded bus surrounded by others like her to flee the advancing North Vietnamese Army which had reached the outskirts of Saigon. "There was pushing and shoving by everyone trying to get on the bus," she said, "and I struggled desperately to hang on to my son." They did get on board, but as the jammed buses tried to leave the area occupied by the US Information Agency, where Nga

had worked as a sound editor of motion pictures and had spent the previous day and night, they were stopped at the gate by old guard authorities. Gates opened only after U.S. MPs intervened. Then as they headed toward the airport and waiting U.S. Marine Corps helicopters that would evacuate them to the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet at Vung Tau, the driver suddenly stopped the bus and demanded money.

Finally at the airport, Marines helped the thousands of fleeing refugees board helicopters in groups of 25. "We called them angels for the way they protected us," said Nga. "Some families had been separated, and the Marines did what they could to help us stay together." At Vung Tau they boarded the ship *American Racer* which carried them along with 4500 other refugees to Wake Island. "There will be no cruises for me," says Nga. We sailed for eleven days to reach Wake Island. It was very crowded on the ship, we ate C-rations all the time, and there were no facilities for hygiene.

When nature called, it meant going to the side of the ship; I was so afraid of falling into the sea."

After two months on Wake Island, Nga and her son were flown to Indiantown Gap Military Reservation in Central PA where they waited another two months for resettlement. For more than eight months in 1975, more than 32,000 Vietnam and Cambodian refugees were resettled through the Indiantown Gap installation.

The members of Ss. Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Erie sponsored Nga and her son for resettlement. She met Erie journalist Brian Kinal in 1981 while working at Rockwell International in Falls Church, VA. They married, and she returned to Erie. She began working as an interpreter for the Multi-Cultural Health Delivery System (MHEDS) in 1981 and continued service there for seventeen years. Following that she worked in the Language Services

Dept. at the Hispanic-

### Coming Events

- August 14 - Erie Gives
- August 18 - MCRC at Celebrate Erie
- August 19 - Ramadan closes
- August 21-23 - New Semester ESL orientation
- August 27 - First day of school - City of Erie
- August 31 - Refugee Health Seminar
- September 3 - Labor Day - MCRC closed
- September 6 - MCRC Golf Tournament
- September 8 and 9 - MCRC Soccer Tournament
- September 11 - Patriot Day - Remembrance

American Council, now the Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC) for nine years. She now enjoys retirement, keeps in touch with her son, now 46, who lives and teaches microbiology at a Springfield, MA college, and with her two grandchildren. Among various interests at home, she takes pleasure in caring for her beautiful rose garden. "I love what I do now," she says.

## MCRC Names Associate Directors

The Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC) announced on Wednesday, August 1, 2012 that two upper level staff have been promoted:



**Allan D. Turner, PhD, LCSW, ACSW** was promoted to Associate Director – Programs. He was previously the Director of Client Services at MCRC. Dr. Turner received his doctorate in Social Work from Barry University, Ellen Whiteside McDonnell School of Social Work in Miami Shores, Florida. He was previously employed as an associate professor at Edinboro University and currently works a per diem therapist at Safe Harbor Behavioral Health.



**Joanna R. Cherpak** was promoted to Associate Director – Operations. She was previously Director of Human Resources and Fund Development at MCRC. Joanna received her bachelor's degree in Business Management at Pennsylvania State University, The Behrend College. She had previously served the MCRC organization when it was the Hispanic American Council as Director of Finance. She had worked at the Achievement Center as a staff accountant and at Rentway Corporate Office as a Budget Analyst.

## MCRC Finds Important Connections Through Erie's International Referral Network

Wonderful opportunities often come from the most unusual sources, at least at MCRC it often seems that way.

At the beginning of 2012, MCRC was invited to attend a meeting with the INTERNATIONAL REFERRAL NETWORK (IRN) of Erie, who were interested in our organization becoming a member of their group. The IRN is a group of professional businesspersons, each of whom represents a specific category of business, and whose goal is to assist each other by making referrals. Categories include real estate, accounting, media advertising, insurance, electrician services, carpet cleaning, home inspection, roofing, financial planning, and the list goes on. MCRC was invited to fill the group's Non-Profit category. Since MCRC joined the IRN, individual group members and the group as a whole, have assisted our community organization by sponsoring lanes and teams in our Annual Bowling Tournament, providing a tee sponsorship for our upcoming Golf Tournament, facilitating a Home Buying Seminar for our clients, assisting with client training programs for Real Estate and Insurance, and by making a variety of other donations to MCRC programs. In addition, MOSAICO, our for-profit employment agency, has since joined the IRN, filling the Employment Services category.

This networking group meets each Thursday morning at 7:15 for breakfast at the Maennerchor Club and to share referrals and information regarding each other's programs. The group provides MCRC with a unique opportunity to connect with the Erie business community and share our programs, mission and vision. MCRC is grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this community business organization. For more information regarding your business becoming a member of the IRN of Erie, please contact **Dr. Allan Turner at MCRC, 455-0212.**

**Erie Gives is Tuesday, August 14.**

To participate with your donation, link to

<http://www.eriegives.org/about-erie-gives>

For a look at a short MCRC video describing our mission to break down barriers and provide assistance to refugees and others in need, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liWhe6llOkU>



## SUMMER KIDS' PROGRAM TEACHES VALUES, GUIDES ENERGY, PROMOTES ACCEPTANCE

School time is creeping close, but that does not put a damper on MCRC's summer child care program. No matter the heat nor humidity the devoted staff is never afraid to get a little sweaty or dirty. From allowing curious children to aid in weeding the Center's smaller garden to facilitating a game of jump rope in the fleeting shade, these women are truly the good hands sought after by so many working parents for their sons and daughters. Outside or inside, lots of varied activity occupies young minds.

For a growing person full of an endless desire for attention and mental stimulation, the upstairs rooms of MCRC do not disappoint. Among the choices available are varieties of colorful puzzles, easy reading books based on famous novels (such as *The Odyssey*), a frisky yet brave hamster, and plenty of paper to exercise those creative brain cells. Here not only do the children learn by playing, but they also are gradually immersed in an environment of peers whose cultural customs and language may differ in many ways. Learning to appreciate such diversity at this

stage of life provides invaluable social skills and will enhance their view and understanding of the world.

Above all, MCRC's childcare program integrates important physical activity and more relaxed settings such as story time or doodling. With a mission to encourage and continue intercultural acceptance among Erie's diverse population and provide a safe yet effective learning environment for children, the staff is always glad to welcome new children.

So whether you are an occupied parent or know someone in need of childcare, this may just be the golden gem you have been searching for.



## Volunteer Spotlight

MCRC is pleased to shine a summer spotlight onto two wonderful volunteers – **Uma Rajiyah** and **Larissa Chen**. Both high school students, these volunteers came to MCRC in late June. Since then, they have been providing valuable assistance each week to MCRC's Day Care Staff!



Larissa and Uma

Both enjoy helping with the Day Care. Whether they take the children to the playground, teach them to jump rope, or get ready for the Day Care Department's Talent Show; they come to every task with a smile and share their own sweet spirit with the children. And their example is an important influence on the children.

Uma and Larissa are also passionate about the MCRC organization. Uma says, "I like the MCRC because there are a lot of different backgrounds and ethnicities here. One of the daycare staff was telling me about a family that came to MCRC a year ago. They didn't speak any English. Now the whole family speaks English, and the children are fluent. That's why the MCRC is cool."

Larissa agrees that the MCRC is a really interesting place to be. She says, "I'm learning a lot from them. I really like MCRC. When my parents came to America, they felt that there was no one to help them. MCRC gives help to people; they help people adapt to life in the United States."

Larissa is a rising junior at McDowell High School, and Uma is a September freshman at Northwestern Collegiate Prep. As they return to school studies and activities, we wish them the best for many successes at school this year, and express our sincere thanks for their hard work and generous help!

**AWESOME!**

**MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER**

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Benefiting the Multicultural Community Resource Center

**1st Annual MCRC Hitting the Cultural Links Golf Tournament**

**Thursday, September 6, 2012**  
Lake Shore Country Club  
5950 Lake Shore Drive, Erie

Registration: 12:00 Noon – Sharp! • 1:00 Shotgun Start • 18-Hole Play

For Registration or Info Contact:  
Joanna Cherpak  
MCRC • 554 East 10th Street • Erie, PA 16503  
**814.455.0212**

\$100 Non-Members Includes: Hot Dog Lunch, Scramble, Greens Fees, Riding Cart, Premium Steak Dinner, Prizes!

Thanks for your Support!

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**Your Donation is Appreciated**

To make a financial gift to MCRC, send it to **Joanna Cherpak, Associate Director—Operations** East 10th St., Erie, PA 16503 or donate online at [www.multiculturalcrc.org](http://www.multiculturalcrc.org).

MCRC is a 501 (c)(3) charity and all donations are tax deductible.

*MCRC volunteer opportunities exist for one-time or continuing activities.*

*Please visit the Volunteer tab at our Website at [www.multiculturalcrc.org](http://www.multiculturalcrc.org).*

*To inquire, send an email to [MCRC@multiculturalcrc.org](mailto:MCRC@multiculturalcrc.org). Be sure to include your name and phone number in your message.*



**A great day to help MCRC**

**Erie Gives is on Tuesday, Aug. 14 from 8 am to 8 pm.**



The Erie Community Foundation will match a percentage of each donation made to MCRC through the Erie Gives event. On Aug. 14, the Foundation will share \$76,000 among participating nonprofits, with an additional \$25,000 from GE Transportation.

**Proudly serving the needs of the Hispanic and refugee communities since 1975.**