

MCRC NOTICIAS



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ANSUMANA GBEMBO SEEKS HOPE, RENEWAL IN THE FABRIC OF LIFE

Erie resident **Ansumana Komba Gbembo** has brought to our community his talent and experience as a gifted tailor. Since his arrival in Erie in September 2009, as the only refugee immigrant here from Sierra Leone in west Africa, he has overcome a serious health condition, separation from family, the challenge of learning North American English, finding a job, and living independently. Now his focus is on fulfilling his plan to earn enough money to bring his wife Sesay, whom he hasn't seen for two years, to the U.S. and to develop his business trade as a tailor and eventually open his own shop.



Ansumana Komba Gbembo

For Ansumana, big life challenges began in 1998 when he and his parents, brothers and sisters were forced to leave their home in Koidu in the Kono District of Sierra Leone. From there they travelled to a refugee camp in the neighboring country of Guinea. Best known as an important diamond mining region, Sierra Leone's Kono District had become a primary target of rebel forces, and people living there, including children, had to choose to either join the rebel groups or leave.

After the family resettled in Guinea, Ansumana's father sent him on to Gambia for training as a tailor. There he lived for ten years, learning and practicing his trade. During that time, Ansumana also developed a serious kidney illness. When the advanced care he needed could not be provided in Gambia, Ansumana came to the U.S. as a medical refugee and received urgent surgical care at Hamot Medical Center. Today, his health is good, and he is grateful to the American people for saving his life.

Early months in Erie were difficult. There were no other people from his homeland living here, and his only friend was a Somali man

whom he had met on the journey and who also spoke the British form of English that Ansumana knows. He found he could not trust co-workers at a previous workplace, and after being attacked by a gang of seven young men on an Erie street, he felt unsafe to move about. Since those early months, however, he has discovered that other Americans are more giving, and he is enjoying many new friendships and opportunities. "I am from the family of a chief," he says, "but I want Americans to know we are a humble family. I believe in God, and I live by the principle that what I don't like, I won't give to others."

Today, Ansumana has a steady job at CHAT-MI, has his own residence, and is currently completing GED studies through a community-sponsored job –prep program conducted by MCRC at the John Horan Garden Apartments Community Center. He owns his own sewing machine and looks forward to growing his business as a trained tailor for both men and women. And of course, he dreams daily of being reunited with his wife and family.

Coming Events

- Jan 23—Chinese New Year: Year of the Dragon
- Jan 23, 26, & 30—Feb 2—ESL Classes orientation
- Jan. 26—Job Development Dinner (John Horan Apts.)
- Jan 26—Australia Day
- Feb. —Black History Month
- Feb. 2—Groundhog Day
- Feb. 4—Mawlid Al-Nabi
- Feb. 5—Constitution Day (Mexico)
- Feb. 5—Super Bowl Sunday
- Feb. 14—Valentines Day
- Feb. 14—Race Relations Day
- Feb. 20—Presidents Day

Multicultural Community Resource Center of Erie

James Globa, Board President
Joel Tuzynski, Executive Director

MCRC Noticias Editorial Team:

Joanna Cherpak, Dir. of HR & Fund Dev.
Allan Turner, PhD, Dir. Of Client Services
Trish Lawrence, Staff Social Worker
Al Richards, Volunteer Editor
554 East 10th St., Erie, PA 16503
PhD: 814.455.0212
FAX: 814.453.2363
Email: MCRC@multiculturalcrrc.org

ROLL WITH DIVERSITY BOWLING TOURNAMENT



On **April 28th**, 2012, the MCRC will hold its 3rd Annual **"Roll with Diversity" Bowling Tournament** at Eastway Lanes in Harborcreek. The tournament has grown from an idea of the GE Hispanic Forum in 2010, when 12 teams competed raising approximately \$500 for the MCRC. In 2011, twenty-seven teams participated and MCRC raised almost \$5,000. **Eddie Ocasio**, Tournament Coordinator, has set a goal of raising \$10,000 with up to 40 teams participating. Working with our co-sponsors, the General Electric Hispanic Forum, we are considering hosting a morning children's tournament, and having a 2 tier tournament for adult bowlers in the afternoon. When registering, teams will identify themselves as either 'recreational' or 'competitive/league' teams, and compete against other teams in their respective tier. This way, more teams will get to take trophies home!!

Five member teams register for the tournament by submitting a \$50 team fee that pays for 2 games of bowling, shoe rental (if needed) and all the pizza and soda bowlers can consume. The actual fundraising comes from the expectation that each team will raise \$100 in pledges. Additionally, last year we reached out to businesses in the Erie community who were provided opportunities to

sponsor lanes at \$100 each. Because of these businesses, we were able to find sponsorship for each of the 27 lanes and raise another \$2,700.

Bowling is a very American sport and not one in which virtually any of the many cultures we serve have participated before. It is a great opportunity to engage these diverse communities in this American recreational activity. Mr. Ocasio reports that the registration for this year's tournament will begin in February and teams can usually register up until the week before the tournament. Anyone interested in more information regarding our 3rd Annual "Roll with Diversity" Bowling Tournament can call 814-455-0212.

** The General Electric Hispanic Forum is a group of Latino employees at GE who have provided volunteer support to the MCRC for many years. MCRC is grateful for their assistance as co-sponsors of the Roll with Diversity Tournament.*

We have reached places such as Mongolia, Germany, Indonesia, Denmark, and other countries, not to mention all the places in the United States.



Kathleen Noce, PhD



Penn State Erie, The Behrend College Offers Expertise for MCRC Website

The Multicultural Community Resource Center is extremely pleased with the work that **Dr. Kathleen Noce** of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College and her MIS students have done for our website. The results have been phenomenal for us. The website has become an excellent marketing tool and a gateway for people to find information on MCRC. We have been able to track from where around the world people are looking at our site. We have reached places such as Mongolia, Germany, Indonesia, Denmark, and other countries, not to mention all the places in the United States. It is the functionality of our site that makes it "travel the globe".

Dr. Noce and the PSE students are much appreciated for all the expertise they have provided in getting us to where we can manage the site ourselves. Everyone is so knowledgeable and is always willing to assist even with a small task. Although we are somewhat self-sufficient in maintaining the site, we have comfort in knowing we can always rely on their continuing support. Our IT staff is comprised of one part-time person, so this support is very crucial to the longevity of the site.

We are very proud of our website. Please visit us at www.multiculturalcrc.org today!

AMERICAN BY CHOICE



“Proud to be an American” is a declaration that has yet to be defined. As Americans, we pledge allegiance to Old Glory; we sing the Star Spangled Banner before the first pitch; we honor our veteran heroes with parades in November; and foremost, we celebrate our independence with the rumble and roar of fireworks after a day’s picnic every July 4th. There is no denying that we are all rightfully Americans by spirit, but what constitutes an American by law? What is a citizen of the United States legally?

For the majority of U.S. citizens, the answer requires no contemplation, simply a right granted by birth in this country. However, birthright is not the only means of becoming a citizen. Other citizens who cannot claim their birth in the United States have obtained citizenship through a process known as naturalization, becoming a U.S. citizen at will. A naturalized citizen is one who has gone through an examination process of meeting requirements, pledging full allegiance to the United States, and accepting responsibilities of a citizen, reciprocally, to receive rights and privileges of such.

A prospective candidate for naturalization may submit an application accompanied by a fee of \$680.00 to United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). In order to be eligible, a candidate must first be at least 18 years of age and a lawful permanent resident, otherwise known as a green card holder, for at least 5 years, generally. Throughout those respective years, the candidate must comply with continuous and physical residency requirements, in a sense proving to consider the United States “home” by fact of physically being and maintaining a life here. Therefore, spending too much time outside of the USA may risk eligibility.

Equally as important, a candidate must also prove to be an individual of good moral character, demonstrating a pattern of legal and acceptable behavior. Certain crimes committed may bar one permanently from becoming a citizen of the United States while other offenses pose temporary bars, only postponing eligibility. Each candidate is required to appear at a USCIS Center for fingerprinting from which a criminal background investigation is performed for public security and processing purposes.

In addition to exemplary behavior, there is a more active part of “earning” your citizenship: demonstrating basic proficiency in the English Language and knowledge of U.S. History/Civics. While appearing for an interview at a USCIS Office, a candidate must successfully write and read some English along with answering questions such as “What led to the Civil War?” Citizenship classes are designed to prepare for this examination.

Upon passing the interview, the candidate is scheduled to appear before a judge at a ceremony, pledge under oath allegiance to the U.S., and accept a certificate of naturalization. By swearing to this oath, the candidate displays attachment to the fundamental principles of liberty and democracy guaranteed by our Constitution and declares a willingness to defend and provide service to our country. The end result is a naturalized citizen.

To become Naturalized is to genuinely become an American by choice, and through no easy means. Citizenship may not always be viewed as a birth right, but rather as an earned privilege.

*- Nick Bobango,
MCRC Immigration Services*

Thanks to Annual Campaign Donors

MCRC would like to thank the generosity of the following donors who contributed to our Year End Annual Appeal Campaign. Funds from this campaign will go towards funding a new Child Care Room for infants:

Eileen Cullen, Ph.D.
Lydia Garcia, M.D.
James & Sandy Globa
Michael Grab
R.M. Knoll Services
Attorney Richard Perhacs

Dr. Richard & Wilma Rahner
Sanner Office Supply
Mary Lou Scottino
Gary & Susan Sullivan
Joel Tuzynski

Do you think you have the knowledge to pass the citizenship test? Follow this link to take a practice test:

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menu-item.d72b75bdf98917853423754f526e0aa0/?vgnex-toid=afd6618bfe12f210VgnVCM10000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=afd6618bfe12f210VgnVCM10000082ca60aRCRD>



MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

554 East 10th Street
Erie, PA 16503

Phone: 814-455-0212
Fax: 814-453-2363
Web: www.multiculturalcrc.org



MCRC volunteer opportunities exist for one-time or continuing activities.
Please visit the Volunteer tab at our Website at www.multiculturalcrc.org.
To inquire, send an email to MCRC@multiculturalcrc.org. Be sure to include your name and phone number in your message.

Your Donation is Appreciated
To make a financial gift to MCRC, send it to **Joanna Cherpak, Director of HR & Fund Development**, 554 East 10th St., Erie, PA 16503 or call her at 814.455.0212, X329 or go to our website and **DONATE** online.
MCRC is a 501 (c)(3) charity and all donations are tax deductible.

MOSAICO AT NEW LOCATION
MOSAICO Employment Services, Inc., a for-profit venture of MCRC, has moved to its new location at the **Bethany Outreach Center, 254 East 10th St., Suites 107 & 108**.
The phone number remains the same:
814-464-0970
...and so does the same great service they provide.

Ansumana Komba Gbembo, featured on our front page, was born and reared in Koidu Town in Sierra Leone. Also known as Koidu, it is the capital, largest city, and economic center of the diamond-rich Kono District in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. It is a major business hub and diamond trade center. Estimated population in 2006 was 111,800.

The city is ethnically and culturally diverse. Most of the foreign diamond workers in the Kono District reside in the city. The Krio language is the most widely spoken language in the area and is used as the primary language of communication among the residents in Koidu Town.

(Source: Wikipedia)

Ansumana's hometown



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