

MCRC NOTICIAS



Volume 2, Issue 11
November, 2012

1st-Time Voter Cherishes His Citizen's Right



Anwar Abdulreda and daughter Benin

Anwar S. Abdulreda came to the United States and Erie in 2003 from Karbala, Iraq seeking freedom and the fulfillment of a young man's dream to live in America. He marked his achievement of an important part of that dream on November 6, 2012 when Anwar voted for the first time as a U.S. Citizen in a national election.

Ron Fye, Anwar's ESL/GED instructor and mentor at MCRC, describes the experience and its influence on him as an observer in the following words:

For Anwar, becoming a United States citizen was a great honor and he was excited that he had registered to vote. A week before the election, he requested that I go with him to the poll. He was unsure how and where to vote.

On Election Day, Anwar informed me after classes that he needed to go home and change clothes. Although he had on a clean

pair of jeans, dress shirt and dress shoes, he did not think his attire was appropriate, since he was very proud to have the right to vote. Here was an individual who, on Election Day, wanted to put on his dress suit and take with him the same flag he had received when he became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

When I met with him at the polling place, Anwar stepped out of his car wearing his suit: he was extremely proud to vote in this Presidential Election.

For the first time, as I walked into the voting poll and looked around, I experienced a truly different view of what it means to vote, to have a voice, and how the touch of the ballot screen for a new American is an incredible and powerful experience. Watching Anwar, a man who had never before had a right to vote, step up to a booth, I truly realized that as citizens we must never take for granted our right and our obligation to vote.

Anwar and his wife Howrah and their daughter Benin are the living spirit of what we value as American people: family, freedom, and a realization of hopes and dreams.

While continuing his studies in English language, Anwar has worked as a machine operator and as a long-distance truck driver throughout the northeastern U.S. On the road, he has experienced and appreciated the help and encouragement of veteran drivers whom he counts among "good American people." As life continues, he hopes to complete studies for a GED, go to college, and become a Physical Education teacher.

Coming Events

- Nov. 26—Senior Program begins
- Dec. 5— Seminar on Coupon Shopping
- Dec. 17-19—ESL Orientation
- Dec. 21—MCRC closed half day
- Dec. 24,25—MCRC closed
- Dec. 21—Jan. 1—ESL classes closed
- Every Mon. & Wed.—Karate, 5– 6:30
- Jan. 19— Community briefing on GED changes

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Executive Director Reflects on Mission, Partnerships and Continued Service Development

2012 has been a year of program review and re-evaluation of the Mission, and strategic direction of MCRC. As I enter my 10th and final year of full-time leadership, I am intensely optimistic regarding the many new forms of service we are developing to meet the needs of the New Americans in Erie, while ensuring a sustainable future for MCRC. An organized, customizable, Diversity Training program has been started, to help us realize our agency's mandate to "educate the community to value diversity". Our new Cultural Enrichment Center was recently dedicated, and a new model of preventive health care is rapidly emerging, with the conception of a new, United Way funded, ESL, "Wellness Center" program.

Our refugee program has added a new senior outreach program, and a new initiative has been developed with the Office of Children and Youth, and the Erie School District, to provide truancy prevention services to strengthen programs available to our Hispanic community. Finally, our purchase the 10th Street United Methodist Church will be a reality by the end of this year, and we will have additional office, kitchen, and gymnasium space, available for programming. The old community room in the basement will expand into a coffee shop and tea room, for students to relax, and socialize, with the many diverse cultural groups in Erie. We hope at least figuratively to create a melting pot of ideas, diverse opinions, and new directions for human coexistence, tolerance, and lasting Peace of our rapidly shrinking world.

We have continued to strengthen our partnerships with the International Institute, Catholic Charities, and the St. Benedict Education Center, and we are getting closer, with each new day, to building a seamless and streamlined service system of refugee services. All of these new programs would not have been possible without the help of our Board of Directors, Staff, volunteers, and Governmental, business, and community partners.

We all should be thankful for the Blessings we have realized this last year, and excited for the promise of each new day ahead. The privilege of leading such a culturally rich, loving accepting, and vibrant organization, has been mine for almost a decade. The memories of all the faces, the stories, and the struggles of our organization, will be with me forever. Gracias' me Amigos!



*Joel C. Tuzynski, M.S.W.
Executive Director*

Asian Pacific American Association Members Volunteer to Prep New MCRC Health Clinic

The Erie **Asian Pacific American Association (APAA)** recently donated their time to painting the new Wellness Center at MCRC. This association was established in Erie in 2005 through a collaborative effort between the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership and local businesses and universities. The purpose of this Association is to network and promote awareness of Asian cultures through community activities and outreach.

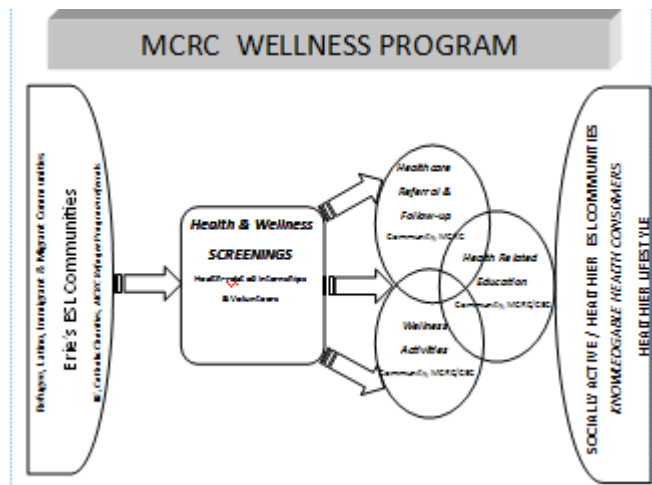
Ten dedicated volunteers from a variety of Asian and main-stream cultures spent a fun-filled morning in early November painting the five rooms of the new clinic. They were extremely happy to help MCRC beautify the old office space, since part of their mission is to serve the Erie community. This was especially meaningful to the group because the clinic will provide services to refugees and immigrants resettling into the Erie area.



Wellness Center: Healthier Communities is the Goal

For a long time, MCRC has been concerned about the healthcare needs of the clients we serve. In September of this year, the Multicultural Community Resource Center submitted a plan to the United Way for the development of a 'Wellness Center', to be located on the first floor of the main MCRC building at 10th and Ash streets. At the end of October, the United Way informed MCRC that it had decided to fund the proposal that would offer health and wellness screenings to refugee, Latino, migrant and immigrant persons in Erie and based on the screenings, coordinate referral to follow-up medical assessment or care, provide health-related education workshops, and wellness activity programming at the Cultural Enrichment Center. For example, if during the screening the individual appears to be at-risk for diabetes, our Wellness Facilitator will assure a follow-up is made for further medical assessment and if needed, treatment. In addition, the individual will be offered the opportunity and encouraged to participate in a diabetes education and nutrition workshops, offered in their native languages and also receive health/wellness coaching. The third part of the individual's wellness plan will include participation in wellness-activities, such as classes on shopping for healthy foods, food preparation, or physical activities, like fitness classes, a runners' club or tai chi. Our goal is to have more socially active, health-knowledgeable and ultimately healthier clients. MCRC is fortunate to have medical space available for this program and a supportive community environment. Since the program will be primarily volunteer staffed, we are actively seeking the assistance of community members will health-related skills to assist. To date, volunteer assistance has

been offered by the LECOM medical students' organization, the Family Practice Resident Program at St. Vincent's Medical Center, the University of Pittsburgh Dental School, LifeWorks, Inc., the LECOM School of Pharmacy students' group, and many others. We are so appreciative of their support in this effort. Our plan is to reach out to internship programs in rehabilitation, speech, social work, medical assisting, etc., as we progress with fulfilling this plan and ultimately, improving the health of Erie.



Flu Shots Program Growing

During the week of October 8, MCRC, through the support of **LifeWorks** and **CVS**, successfully facilitated the administration of over **500 flu shots** to refugees, immigrants, and local community members. LifeWorks is the local agency that provides annual flu shots to the uninsured free of charge, as well as other services to those in need in the Erie community. The turnout in 2012 was the most successful yet, and we look forward to watching the numbers of those we serve continue to grow in the coming years.



In Memoriam

Sister Maria O'Connor
 Aug. 28, 1928—Nov. 11, 2012

Our Friend
 and
 Member of MCRC
 Board of Directors

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Your Donation is Appreciated

To make a financial gift to MCRC, send it to **Joanna Cherpak, Assoc. Director**, 554 East 10th St., Erie, PA 16503 or donate online at www.multiculturalcrc.org.

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

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*Bat Girl, Bob the Builder, and Even a Princess or Two,
With Some of their Friends Played Holiday "Boo!"
At MCRC's Day Care Halloween Party*



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