

# MCRC NOTICIAS



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## Uzbek Immigrant Finds Erie a Place to Excel



Ask an observer to list trends the city of Erie has experienced in recent years, and you will likely be told of "brain drain" and an exodus of talented young people. Ask someone who works with the city's immigrant and refugee population and you will be told a different story.

In a June 12 ceremony at East High School, eleven MCRC students received GED diplomas in a service honoring graduates across Erie County. Among them was 24-year-old **Zaynab Kargar**, an immigrant from Uzbekistan who speaks five languages (English, Uzbek, Russian, Persian, and Turkish) and plans to remain in Erie for studies at Gannon University this fall.

"Since 2011, Zaynab has blossomed into a young woman with so many opportunities before her," said MCRC teacher **Ron Fye**. "She came to classes, having recently arrived in the United States to be with her family. She is now a young woman who has realized that her dreams are possible. Over time, her confidence has allowed her to achieve the success she has reached. It was a struggle, but her desire to attend college has driven her to where she is now."

Kargar, who served as a speaker at the graduation ceremony, joined her family in Erie in 2010. "I like Erie," said Kargar. "It's a good place to raise kids. I like Erie because of the beaches; it has a lot of tourists. My family is happy here because everyone is together."

It was Kargar's ambition coupled with the education services offered at MCRC that helped put her on her current path. When she first attended GED classes, she struggled to keep pace with the instruction. At the end of her GED studies, she was among the discussion leaders in the classroom. About her experience at MCRC, Kargar said, "It is a good place for GED students. Since 2011 I've seen a lot of GED students graduate."

"From the beginning, Zaynab impressed me," said Fye. "She attended Saturday classes with her father, who was there to offer support. She brought a desire to begin a new life here in the United States. As her confidence and desire to learn grew, she added the evening classes at MCRC. Zaynab expressed her desire to attend college, as well as continue to develop her love of fashion and design."

Zaynab plans to pursue an International Studies curriculum at Gannon in the fall with the intention of continuing to learn new languages and cultures and to visit new countries. She also intends to make service an integral part of her college life and career. "I've always said that if I have money, I will create an account to donate to people who need help," she said.

From Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to Erie, Pennsylvania, Kargar has seen and met challenges, as expressed during her graduation speech.

"Now I am happy that I have completed my GED. Getting my GED has opened many doors of opportunity. I have chosen to open the door and fulfill my vision of attending college. I can say that my dream of attending college is becoming a reality."

### Coming Events

- August 5 – Elder Program Orientation
- August 7—Ramadan ends
- August 13—Erie Gives
- August 17—Celebrate Erie
- August 23—MCRC Employee Picnic (MCRC closed at Noon)
- Every Wednesday 6 to 7pm – coupon exchange – Horan Apts
- Sept. 5—Golf Tournament



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## Staff Leadership Promotions Announced

**Srdan Nincovic** has been promoted to *Senior Program Officer—Finance*. He was previously the Section Manager—RSS Employment at MCRC. Srdan has been employed at MCRC since March 1999. Originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina, he studied Business Economics in Sarajevo. Srdan's position reports to Joanna Cherpak, Associate Director: Operations.



**Anna Tischenko** has been promoted to *Senior Program Officer—Refugee Services*. She previously served as Section Manager—RSS Case Management at MCRC. Anna has been with MCRC since March 2005. Originally from Kyrgystan, she studied English and literature at Bishkek Humanities University in that country. Anna's position reports to Paul Jericho, Associate Director: Programs.

Friends of MCRC are encouraged to circle **August 13** on their calendars as a day **to contribute to the agency and the clients it serves**. As part of the annual Erie Gives Day, donations can be made through [www.eriegives.org](http://www.eriegives.org) from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Further, a percentage of each donation will be matched by the Erie Community Foundation. MCRC encourages you to donate generously so that we can strengthen our service to the families, businesses, and neighborhoods that make up our community.

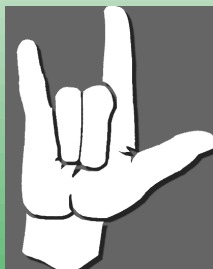


## Clients with Hearing Impairment Can Learn Via Bilingual Sign Language

A few months ago we brought you the story of the American Sign Language program, a program started by MCRC to help address the unique issues facing our deaf and hard of hearing Bhutanese clients. Many had never learned a standard sign language, leaving each family to create signals for communication, and as a result making communication outside of their immediate families often impossible. Furthermore, they often received no formal education as children and are illiterate in the written word of their native language. MCRC created our sign language classes with the hope of teaching necessary life and communication skills needed to survive in our culture, but soon after we began, we realized this program was so much more.

Through this program we have learned of many other refugee individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, isolated in their homes and afraid of their new community. Our classes continue to grow in participants, each being welcomed by other participants with smiles and hugs. Amazingly enough we have watched friendships be rekindled. To see two people meet again for the first time since leaving the refugee camp, often not realizing that they were resettled in the same community, can bring an emotional tear. They are learning how to communicate, and are beginning to find greater independence in their lives. They are also finding new purpose and identity within the class, being able to help those around them and engaging with various MCRC staff and volunteers. Our clients with hearing impairment have taken the responsibility for a garden plot in the back lot of MCRC's main building and can be seen out there weeding and harvesting their crops regularly.

But maybe the most exciting thing to recently happen with this program has been meeting two second migration Bhutanese brothers, one hearing and one deaf, and learning that they are *skilled in both Nepali and American sign language*. For the first time since the arrival of the deaf and hard of hearing Bhutanese clients we have someone who can communicate with both our clients and MCRC staff members. We are learning more and more every day about each of them and they are equally delighted to learn of us. These two brothers have accepted the task of helping to teach the class, and are enjoying their new roles within their community. Their enthusiasm is empowering and those of us that work alongside this group is excited to see where the next year will take us. We are continuing to look for new and creative ways to expand this program and continue to look at the large community for ideas and suggestions. We have had a lot of support from the general Erie community, especially from the local deaf and hard of hearing community, and look forward to the continued expansion of these kinds of services. Thank you to everyone who has helped make this program so very successful.





## Aloha from the Education Department

In Hawaiian, *aloha* means both hello and goodbye, so it seems the perfect word to use here. The first *aloha* goes out to our newest staff members: **Rodney Fry** and **Jacki Slagle**. Rodney, a graduate of Edinboro University, recently returned to the Erie area from Philadelphia. While there, he taught art, reading and math skills over the course of four years. Rodney will be working with beginners and those preparing to take the GED®. Though teaching ESL is new to him, he is looking forward to the challenge.

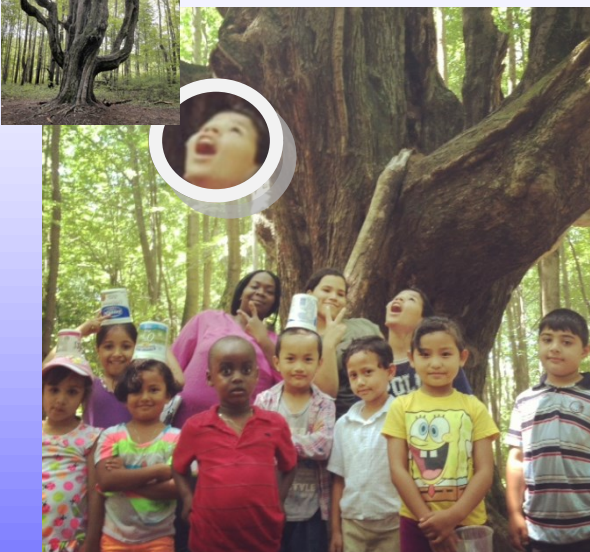
Jacki Slagle grew up in Harborcreek, graduating from Penn State University, before moving to Portland, OR. She started her career in gang prevention, and worked with Somali/Bantu refugees as a tutor coordinator with AmeriCorps. She is working on her MA in Education from Portland State University. Jacki will be the tutor coordinator for the program, tasked with finding and training volunteer instructors to support our lowest level learners. Her background and experience will enhance our education programs.

Another *aloha* is needed because the Education Department is saying thank you and goodbye to **Valerie Booth**, as she and her family return to Texas. She has been a caring and dedicated instructor, who will be missed! We are also wishing **Liv Aamodt** well as she transitions into retirement life. We are happy to report she will still serve at MCRC as a substitute teacher, assisting our clients with her invaluable experience, and supportive attitude. *Mahalo* (thank you) to all of you, for sharing your time and talents with MCRC!

## MCRC's Summer Program Kids Visit Asbury Woods Nature Center



July 12 was a great day for a hike in the woods, and that's just what the kids in the MCRC Summer Daycare Program did. Among other adventures and activities, they stopped for a look at and photo with Asbury's landmark "Grandmother Tree" — a huge red maple said to be 85 to 95 years old.



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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](http://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](http://www.multiculturalcrc.org)

or look for us on the Erie Chamber of

Commerce site at

[www.eriepaconnect.com](http://www.eriepaconnect.com)

To inquire, send an email to

**MCRC@multiculturalcrc.org**. Be sure to include your name and phone number in your message.

Benefiting the Multicultural Community Resource Center



**The 2nd Annual  
MCRC Hitting The  
Cultural Links Golf  
Tournament**

Event Sponsor:

Mosaico Employment Services

**Thursday, September 5, 2013**

**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**

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**814.455.0212**

**Fee: \$100 per golfer includes Hot Dog lunch, Scramble,  
Green Fees, Riding Cart, Premium Steak Dinner, Prizes!**



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