

CHANGING LIVES



Loaves & Fishes honorees Cecilia Herbert, Maureen Sullivan and Rita Semel (front) with CCCYO Board President Simon Manning celebrating the Agency's work at the 17th Annual Gala.

Your Support Helps Build Good Citizens Through Advocacy, Education and Immigration Services

On a brisk spring morning at the Paramount Theater in Oakland, the smile on **Sister Leocadia Otzoy's** face was hard to miss even in the midst of the excited crowd. She beamed with pride as she waited in line for her naturalization ceremony, along with 1,213 other soon-to-be United States citizens from 107 countries.

"On my own, I couldn't have had the success that I'm experiencing today. I needed support during the process," Sr. Leocadia said about finally earning her citizenship with the help of Catholic Charities CYO's (CCCYO) Refugee & Immigrant Services (RIS) team. "You just cannot do it alone."



Senior Program Director of Refugee & Immigrant Services, Christopher Martinez, with Sister Leocadia Otzoy at her naturalization ceremony.

A missionary from Guatemala, Sr. Leocadia's missions and travel were limited by her lack of legal citizenship. It was a challenge to not be able to visit her aging parents who needed her back home. Since her arrival in the U.S. in 2003, she also felt the weight of not having a voice in her own community.

"I was questioned extensively at the airport each time I came in and out of the U.S. I couldn't stay with my family for more than a year without permission," she said. "I couldn't vote in the presidential election, and my permanent resident card had an expiration date. I really wanted to be a citizen so I could truly feel that I belonged here."

The freedom and security a new citizen experiences once they have achieved their legal status can open up many opportunities they could not enjoy before. "I can feel and see that God opened a new door to me and to my Community," she said. "As a missionary, I am now free to accept a mission in any country."

CCCYO's RIS team helps nearly 3,200 people a year navigate the many pathways to legal status. We help families that have been separated to reunify through family visa petitions, legal residents gain citizenship, undocumented battered immigrant women and children gain legal status, and provide advice and counsel on legal immigration matters.

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Building Good Citizens

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"Citizenship is an achievable goal, but so many don't achieve it," explained **Christopher Martinez**, Senior Program Director of RIS. "It's an earned process, and it's not easy. That is why so many people get denied or get discouraged. That is where CCCYO comes in. We provide guidance through the process and instill clients with the confidence that they are ready. As advocates, we have much more access to information. We work to educate immigrants about their eligibility and make them comfortable with the process."

Just this month, Martinez accompanied another client to her interview. An African woman who began pursuing her citizenship nearly 10 years ago, **Delilah** was a victim of domestic violence. This made her eligible for a U-Visa, which gives crime victims temporary legal status and work eligibility for up to four years. She worked with CCCYO throughout the entire process: obtaining her U-Visa, applying for a green card, applying for citizenship and passing her in-person test.

"Christopher was a great help to me along the way, helping guide me through the proper channels and making sure I understood all my rights," Delilah said. "Had he not educated me about my eligibility and the options available to me, I don't know where I'd be right now. Instead, I'm now a fully legal U.S. citizen."

Would YOU qualify for U.S. citizenship? Could you answer the following questions?

- Under the U.S. Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states?
- The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers.



Have you given these subjects much thought since your high school civics class? Imagine English is not your first language. Imagine you have waited years on the fringes of your community to establish residency or for the proper documentation to apply for citizenship. Then imagine having to take an oral exam including questions that many American-born citizens could not answer in their own native language. These are some of the challenges an immigrant must face to earn U.S. citizenship.

FREE CITIZENSHIP WORKSHOP

Saturday, June 7
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
San Francisco

Visit <http://community.cccyo.org/immigrationevents> for info.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED. Contact cmartinez@cccyo.org to help.

Every Monday afternoon, the RIS team holds educational workshops at CCCYO's service centers in downtown San Francisco and San Mateo to help people determine their eligibility and recommend the best course of action for their situation. Accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals, the RIS team also collaborates with the San Francisco Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs as part of the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, hosting citizenship fairs. *See sidebar about the Initiative.*

Determining eligibility and immigration counseling are not the only services available. We also assist refugees with resettlement, manage cases and provide referrals to retraining services for refugees and asylum-seekers who have fled war and persecution in their home countries. To learn more about RIS services, visit www.cccyo.org. ■



Catholic Charities and SF Supervisors Honor Herbert, Semel and Sullivan at Loaves & Fishes Event



More than 400 people gathered on April 12th at the St. Regis Hotel for the **17th Annual Loaves and Fishes Awards Dinner and Gala** to honor **Cecilia Herbert, Rita Semel** and **Maureen Sullivan** with the **2014 Award for Faith in Action**. These three dedicated advocates of the Agency's mission were celebrated for the many and profound ways they have helped shape CCCYO's important work of serving the Bay Area's neediest residents.

President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors **David Chiu** (pictured at left with CCCYO Executive Director, **Jeff Bialik**) and Supervisor **Eric Mar** joined to celebrate the honorees. "These women are the very best of what it means to tackle poverty," Chiu said as he presented certificates from the Board of Supervisors. "You inspire us all." ■

Community Organizations Collaborate to Educate

San Francisco is home to 50,000 citizenship-eligible residents—more than 80 percent are adults between the ages of 18 and 64. Since last July, Catholic Charities CYO's (CCCYO) Refugee & Immigrant Services team has been part of a coalition of legal and social service providers that has worked together to inform eligible San Franciscans about the process of applying for citizenship.

At the press conference introducing the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, Mayor Ed Lee said immigrants “need to be part of our community, with full participation and engagement.”

The City's Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs developed the collaborative with local philanthropic organizations to identify new approaches, methodologies and service delivery models to promote citizenship and civic participation among immigrants. The funding organizations include The San Francisco Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, Asian Pacific Fund, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees. The City is contributing 50 percent of the total funding and providing resources and technical assistance to grantees.

“San Francisco is a model for the nation in welcoming immigrants and empowering new citizens, but we can do even better,” said Lee. “This Initiative will ensure that San Franciscans who are eligible for citizenship can pursue new opportunities and be part of building our economy.”

Joining CCCYO in this coalition are: the Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus, Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, International Institute of the Bay Area, Jewish Family and Children's Services, La Raza Community Resource Center and Self-Help for the Elderly.

Since the Pathways to Citizenship Initiative began, the group has already held more than six citizenship workshops. The next workshop will be held on **Saturday, June 7** at **Bill Graham Civic Auditorium** in San Francisco.

Visit <http://community.cccyo.org/immigrationevents> for details. ■

Welcoming Strangers

When I hear new citizen success stories like Sr. Leocadia's, I can't help but think of my grandparents. In 1900, my maternal grandmother arrived in the United States from Finland. My dad's father came here from Poland in 1906. Both came through Ellis Island, poor and uneducated. They spoke no English and brought with them only the clothes on their backs and the strength of purpose to build a better life for themselves and their families.



Throughout our country's history, immigrants have arrived on our shores, overcoming incredible obstacles to get here and facing many challenges to stay. This is not just an immigrant story; this is an American story. This is the story of our families, our Church and our community. This is also a story of social justice: the right to work, to self-determination and to provide for one's family.

CCCYO fully embraces its Judeo/Christian faith tradition's call to welcome the stranger. We help immigrants and refugees earn their legal status, achieve economic self-sufficiency, and become fully active participants in the social and civic life of our communities. In this way, we are continuing to create the same pathways of opportunity that my grandparents had to pursue the American Dream.

We are honored to be a part of San Francisco's Pathways to Citizenship Initiative to educate and encourage immigrants to become legal citizens. Much work remains, and that work will require many more volunteer hours and further financial support. I am confident that, together with your continued support, we can help make dreams that once seemed out of reach a reality for many more who aspire to fully contribute to our communities.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

Jeff Bialik
Executive Director



Little Children's Aid Delivers Mother's Day Joy

For over 100 years, **Little Children's Aid (LCA)** auxiliary has raised funds and provided services to support CCCYO's children's programs. Their **Mother's Day Roses Project** is a wonderful example. Honoring them with roses, LCA offers love and empathy to moms in our shelters who struggle to raise children amidst the hardship of homelessness, abuse, joblessness and chronic medical conditions.

The effort was initiated in 1999 by **Connie D'Aura**, who reflected, “I wanted to acknowledge the sacrifices these moms make and affirm how awesome they are that, even in a bad spot, they are able to maintain their families.” LCA members **Diane Gutierrez** and **Karen Sanchez-Corea** have continued this tradition.

To raise money for the Roses Project, they organize direct flower sales. Their joy comes when these mothers beam on Mother's Day. Diane overheard one mom say, “I've never gotten flowers before...much less on Mother's Day!”

To learn more about LCA, contact Diane at dianegutrz@hotmail.com or Karen at kscorea@aol.com. ■



Catholic Charities CYO

San Francisco, San Mateo & Marin

180 Howard Street, Suite 100
San Francisco, CA 94105

415.972.1200
www.cccyo.org

Find us @
www.facebook.com/CatholicCharitiesCYO
twitter.com/cccyoadsf



COCKTAILS & COMPASSION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11

Happy Hour Benefiting HIV/AIDS Supportive Housing
6 – 9 p.m.

The Archive @ CREDO
360 Pine Street, San Francisco

Visit www.cccyo.org to buy your ticket today!

Specialty cocktails, raffles and more.

Proceeds from Cocktails & Compassion will benefit:

Assisted Housing & Health Programs

Leland House

Derek Silva Community

Peter Claver Community

Hazel Betsey Community

Rita da Cascia Community