



International Institute Rhode Island

Newsletter

Serving immigrants and refugees one family at a time since 1921

Summer 2006

Over 800 students served in 27 classes at the International Institute during the 2005-2006 school year

Program quality, accessibility to morning, evening and weekend classes, outstanding teacher support, and a conducive learning environment, are the hallmarks of IIRI's Education and Training Program. "Moving people up the ladder of success is the goal of all Institute

classes," says Education and Training Director Nazneen Rahman. And after 26 years at IIRI, Rahman knows what she's talking about. The Institute's Education and Training Program is a model of success with 85% of its students working and paying taxes while finding time to better

their English and job skills. Teachers average more than 15 years of experience, class attendance was at 90% in 2006, and program staff are aided by an array of dedicated volunteers, including a number of people who have been helping out Rahman and her team for up to a decade.



Left: First year ESL students tell us their number one priority is to get a better job and English is the key. A main highlight for this group of six was the computer lab where they not only enhance their grammar, spelling, and vocabulary but gain invaluable technological skills. Teacher Anibal Montes proudly reports excellent attendance for these students despite very busy schedules with family, work and class.



Right: Romy Diaz with her daughter celebrates her IIRI graduation.



Left: Executive Director Bill Shuey and Citizenship Teacher Mary Troeger can't thank Bob Maccedona enough for his 8 years of service as an outstanding "Citizenship Volunteer". Students completing classes average a 95% pass rate on the U.S. Naturalization exam.



Right: Diversity is cherished in IIRI's classrooms. Recent students and graduates hail from more than 46 countries.

In this issue:

Page 2:

How do you balance marriage, school, a full-time job, and give back to your community? One Columbian couple knows how.

Page 3:

You know you had fun at the 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball, but just how successful were we?

Page 4:

Do you know the definition for a refugee? An immigrant? Test your knowledge!

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Meet Patricia and Jaime

A story of romance, determination, and hard work

This is a story an amazing story of two soul mates who work together to make their lives the best they can be. A story with lessons for all of us - lessons of love, mindfulness, and gratitude.

Six years ago Patricia, an architect, and Jaime, an engineer, both from Colombia, moved to Providence, Rhode Island. At that time they didn't have any family in the state nor did they speak any English. The economy in their homeland was too unstable for them to bear and, according to Jaime, they came "for better opportunities, a better life, a better quality of life."

Within a short time after arrival they were working. They took jobs in carpentry, plumbing, cleaning houses, and waiting tables. For five years they also delivered newspapers, 365 days a year - starting at 2:00 am everyday. They spoke only Spanish during their first two years in Providence. But they "wanted to do and learn more" and they knew they needed to speak English to accomplish this goal. They began taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the International Institute of Rhode Island in the evenings.

For a time, Patricia and Jaime found themselves starting their day at 2:00 a.m. delivering newspapers, cleaning houses and offices during the day, then going to classes at the Institute in the evening, ending their day at 9:00 pm. It was an exhausting time but they were happy and thankful they had the opportunity to do everything together.



Patricia and Jaime at the International Institute

"The International Institute ESL classes were a tremendous help," says Patricia. Not only did they learn English, eventually leading them to find better jobs, but they also learned about the U.S. - formally in their ESL lessons and informally through their teachers and other students. Two lessons that stick out to Patricia and Jaime were why and how we pay taxes and the importance of recycling. They loved the wide range of diversity in their classrooms and they learned to understand many different accents. This accelerated their English proficiency, especially their listening skills, and taught them a great deal about the many cultures in the U.S. "Thanks to the International Institute. And a special thanks to our teachers. We learned a lot. Much more than just English."

In the summer of 2005, after only four years of studying English at the Institute, Patricia obtained a job as a loan officer primarily due to her bi-lingual language skills. Three months later Jaime was asked to join the same company in a similar position. They are (continued on page 4)

Thanks to your support the 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball raised \$150,000 for IIRIs programs and services

The Ball Continues to be the Ocean State's most diverse "gala extraordinaire" of the year!



Master of Ceremonies Dr. Pablo Rodriguez with his wife Diane, and their sons Rafe and Kiki.

1,100 people danced and laughed the night away, all while helping to raise \$150,000 at the 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball on April 22nd at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet. All proceeds directly benefit IIRI's programs and services for immigrants and refugees in Rhode Island.

Chaired by two of Rhode Island's finest business leaders, Bank Rhode Island's President and CEO, Merrill W. Sherman, and Taco, Inc.'s President John Hazen White, Jr., the ball broke both fundraising and attendance records.

A parade of flags representing over 50 countries including Liberia, Taiwan, Poland, and Brazil, opened the festivities. Cuban roots band Jose Conde y Ola Fresca brought the crowd to the dance floor. IIRI welcomed back Dr. Pablo Rodriguez of



A guest from the Chinese Folk Art Workshop of Boston with the leader of Big NAZO, Quasi.



The Umbrella Dancers of the Chinese Folk Art Workshop of Boston.

Women's Care Inc. and Barbara Morse-Silva of NBC10 as Co-Masters of Ceremonies. Big NAZO characters and What Cheer? Brigade danced, marched, and entertained the crowd. A dazzling Chinese dragon and graceful umbrella and yo-yo dancers of the Chinese Folk Art Workshop of Boston performed along with exotic belly dancers of Dance Oasis. The night of international entertainment was complete with the sounds of DJ Tony Felix of Rolling Thunder Light and Sound.

IIRI's 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball continued the tradition of high-energy international entertainment and dancing, while bringing the community together in a celebration of cultural understanding. Save the date of Saturday, April 14, 2007 for the next party of the year!



Dominic Quagliozzi hits the dance floor with a Big NAZO character.

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Who is a refugee? An immigrant? Test your knowledge!

You may be quite surprised and even learn something new! Find answers at www.iiri.org

Match the terms with the correct definitions:

1. Immigrant _____
2. Citizenship _____
3. Naturalization _____
4. Alien _____
5. Refugee _____
6. Undocumented _____
7. Naturalization _____

A. The conferring, by any means, of citizenship upon a person after birth.

B. A person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another country.

C. The legal term for people who are not citizens of the country in which they live. While this is the legal, technical term it has negative connotations when used outside of the legal community.

D. A foreign born individual living in the U.S. without correct immigration documentation. This person may have entered illegally or entered legally as visitor or student but has not applied or been approved to continue living in the U.S. Also known as "Illegal Immigrant," however this term is offensive to many.

E. Any person who is outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on the alien's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. These people are unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their government. They are subject to ceilings by geographic area set annually by the U.S. President in consultation

with Congress and are eligible to adjust to lawful permanent resident status after one year of continuous presence in the U.S.

F. The status given to a legal member of a country by birth or naturalization. The person owes allegiance to this country and they are entitled to be protected. This status involves rights, duties, and privileges. After five years of permanent residence, a person may apply for this status. They must pass a test (basic English and U.S. history and government) and interview with a U.S. immigration officer. If they are approved, they are required to take an oath. They then can vote, acquire a passport, and enjoy all of the same rights as someone who was born into this status.

Definitions from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: www.uscis.gov/graphics/glossary.htm

(continued from page 2)

currently the only two Spanish speakers at their company and are highly valued. Not only are they delighted to have found jobs in which they can use more of their skills and talents, but they have also found a place where they can work together. "I start every job with love. If we are working, we are happy," says Patricia. They enjoy their employment and are trying to save so they can relax in future years. Patricia and Jaime are independent souls. "We don't want to depend on others. We depend on each other and that is it," says Jaime.

Filled with gratitude to their new country, Patricia and Jaime recognize their responsibilities to community and want to give back. In addition to their busy work life, for two years they served as volunteers for a blood drive, picking up blood at a drive site and dropping it off at a hospital. In addition, Jaime was recently honored with the Community Engagement Award at the Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy (CHisPA) 4th Annual May Breakfast for actively participating in a number of community programs.

So what is Patricia and Jaime's secret to success? They offer the following advice to newcomers: Learn English. "If you want to improve yourself and your life in the U.S., you must learn English." Learn about life in the U.S. - the laws, customs, and culture. Give back to your community. "This is your new country. This is your home. Make it the best it can be."

What are their future plans? The "future is now," responds Jaime. Their 'plan' is to stick together. "We always stay together. That is our passport to success."

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eNews

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