

Catholic Charities

Providing Help. . . Creating Hope

A Publication of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse

La Crosse	Prairie Du Chien	Eau Claire	Stevens Point	Wausau
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April 27, 2010

Program Highlights-Immigration

Citizenship is something that most of us probably don't think about that much. For most of us it was probably the accident of our birth on United States soil that conferred citizen status upon us. We didn't do anything to earn it. We didn't take a test or swear an oath; we gained our citizenship simply by taking our first breaths in the United States. At the instant of our births we were citizens.

There are other ways to obtain citizenship in the United States, however. "Aliens" are able to become "citizens" through a process called "naturalization." A person who has been a legal permanent resident (had a "green card") for 5 years is eligible to naturalize. A person in this situation would have to show that he doesn't have any criminal or immigration violations that would make him ineligible. If he is eligible to naturalize he submits some paperwork and a couple hundred dollars to USCIS and he is scheduled for a naturalization interview. The interview is conducted in English and he is tested on his knowledge of the English language. He is also tested on U.S. government and history. Who is the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court? How long is a Senator's term? What freedoms are guaranteed by the First Amendment? If he passes the tests he is scheduled for an oath ceremony. At the ceremony the alien swears to renounce all allegiance to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, to support and defend the Constitution, and to bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law, among other things. When the "alien" swears the oath he becomes a "citizen." At that moment he is a citizen of the United States.

These are not the only ways to become a citizen. Recently I was helping a woman and her 14 year old daughter. The mother had become a citizen several years ago, but the girl had no immigration status in the United States. The girl had been brought into the U.S. by relatives to join her mother 12 years ago, when she was almost two years old. Through an unusual immigration law the girl was able to apply for a green card in the U.S. as a result of the fact her father had filed the initial immigration paperwork for her in 1999. Without going into too much detail, the girl was eligible for a green card and all we had to do was have her mom (now a US citizen) file new papers and do the best we could to prove that the girl was in the U.S. on December 21, 2000 (I don't know what is so important about that day, but those are the rules). So, we filed the papers and the evidence of physical presence in the U.S. on Dec. 21, 2000 and the girl was scheduled for an interview at the Immigration Office in Bloomington, MN. At the interview the girl was asked questions to determine if there were any secrets in her life that would make

her ineligible for a green card. Have you ever been arrested? Have you applied for a green card before? Are you a terrorist? When she successfully answered all of the questions she was told that her application for Permanent Resident Status had been approved. At that moment a strange set of legal events was taking place. First, since her application was approved she had changed from a person with no documentation who could be deported at anytime to a legal permanent resident. She could be expecting her “green card” to be coming in the mail in the next couple weeks. Second, since she is under 18 years old and in the physical and legal custody of a U.S. citizen parent and she is now a legal permanent resident she had just also become a U.S. citizen! Like magic she “derived” her citizenship through her U.S. citizen mother—all she had to do was become a legal permanent resident. So, in a couple weeks she will receive her “green card” which will be useless, in a way, since U.S. citizens cannot also be legal permanent residents and therefore she has no use for a green card. However, we will take the “green card” and make a copy of it and send it, along with her birth certificate (showing she is under 18 and the identity of her mother), her mother’s Certificate of Naturalization (proving she is a U.S. citizen), and a couple hundred more dollars, to USCIS and request a Certificate of Citizenship. We need the Certificate because although this girl is a U.S. citizen, and it happened whether or not she knew about it or understood it, we have no way to prove it.

So, about a thousand dollars and two applications and one interview later this girl will be able to prove what she has already achieved by fact of law—citizenship. It is quite powerful to see how much U.S. citizenship means to those who are conscious when they acquire it.

Submitted by Chuck Berendes

Catholic Charities in the Community

Upcoming Events

Advisory Board Meetings

May 4th Eau Claire
May 11th Wausau

April 27th

Portage County Planned Giving
Seminar-Memories Banquet Hall, Plover,
WI; 6-8 p.m.
Contact: Jennifer Woyak

May 13th

Health, Wellness & Safety Fair,
Milt Lunda Memorial Arena, Black River
Falls; 8:30 am-3:00 pm
Contact: Mary Jacobson or Linda
Jawson

May 18th

Chicken Q—Prairie du Chien
100 North Marquette Street
Proceeds to benefit the Catholic
Charities’ Domestic Abuse Program
Contact: Karen Becker

May 21st

Catholic Charities Rummage Sale;
Holy Cross Diocesan Center Gym
Contact: Karen Becker

Grants and Fundraising

Congratulations to the Emergency Services Program and the Immigration Program on grant awards of \$5,000 each from the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Thank you to the Franciscan Sisters for the continued and generous support of Catholic Charities.

Congratulations to the Wausau office on a grant award of \$5,000 from the Judd Alexander Foundation for the Wausau office relocation.

Staff Acknowledgements

Congratulations to Michelle and Jason Shippy along with big brothers Logan and Brandon on the birth of baby girl, Teagen Elizabeth, 6 lbs 4 oz. born Saturday, April 10th!

Congratulations to Emily and Will Mertig on the birth of Carter on April 26th! He weighed 7 pounds and is 21 inches long.

Congratulations on years of service with Catholic Charities to:



Shirley Hubert 10 years of service



Sandy Marx 5 years of service

And Michelle Shippy-5 years of service (no photo as home with baby!)

Catholic Charities Annual Utilities Appeal

Last year Catholic Charities gave help and created hope by providing nearly \$64,000 to several hundred families who came to us seeking utility assistance. Unemployment remains high in the Diocese and the needs of the unemployed continue to increase with each month of unemployment. The underemployed face similar challenges, especially in their inability to provide adequately for their families. They truly need our assistance so that their heating and lights are not turned off.

Your gift to the **Catholic Charities Annual Utilities Assistance Appeal** is one way you can participate with us in promoting human dignity by helping to keep lights on and living quarters warm. **Donations can be sent to Catholic Charities, PO Box 266, La Crosse, WI 54602.**