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McDonald's Innovative English Under the Arches Program Honored as an Exceptional Immigrant Integration Initiative

WASHINGTON – The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) on May 18, 2010 announced the winners of its second annual *E Pluribus Unum* national awards for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives, recognizing an innovative workplace English-for-Speakers-of-Other-Languages (ESOL) program created by McDonald's Corporation with the sole honorable mention.

The *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes program, established by MPI's [National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy](#) with generous support from the [J.M. Kaplan Fund](#), seeks to encourage the adoption of effective integration practices and to inspire others to take on the important work of integrating newcomers and their children so they can become full participants in U.S. society.

McDonald's English Under the Arches program and the four *E Pluribus Unum* Prize winners were honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. featuring national policymakers and elected officials. Winners were selected from nearly 350 applications.

English Under the Arches is a unique workplace English instruction program that provides McDonald's shift managers with the language skills needed to manage restaurant operations and staff. Working with nationally recognized ESOL experts, McDonald's developed a work-based English curriculum that helps immigrant workers gain on-the-job knowledge, skills and confidence. Leveraging relationships with community colleges, known for their expertise in teaching adult ESOL, McDonald's has created a low-cost, high-impact model of English workplace instruction that could be adapted for use by other businesses, government agencies and academic institutions to meet the needs of immigrant workers who are not fully proficient in English.

"McDonald's has created a powerful, replicable model for workplace ESOL teaching that uses technology smartly to allow McDonald's workers in different locations to, in essence, dial in and attend class with the same top-notch instructor," said Margie McHugh, co-director of MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. "McDonald's has not only blazed a path showing that this multiple-site learning model can be effective for major employers and their workers, they have also shown that promoting immigrant integration is good both for their workers and for their business – that's a pretty important message coming from one of our country's leading corporations."

The program's work-based curriculum focuses on critical communication tasks, such as delegation, feedback and working with customers. Students participate from their own restaurants, through the use of web-conferencing technology that allows them to connect with a teacher via phone and computer. The classes take place during working hours, enabling the students to maintain work and family commitments. Classes are paid for by the restaurants' owner-operators.

McDonald's teams up with local community colleges to identify outstanding ESOL instructors interested in this methodology. Through a dedicated website, instructors are recruited and trained on the course curriculum and on virtual teaching.

MPI Senior Vice President Michael Fix, co-director of the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, said, "Almost half of immigrant workers are not proficient in English. The English Under the Arches Program is a very promising and much-needed attempt to provide effective, low-cost instruction to meet the enormous unmet demand for English instruction."

During its first three years, English Under the Arches has trained 500 students at 14 locations around the country, posting an impressive 85 percent graduation rate. Ninety-six percent of graduates later received wage increases, and restaurants have seen a 92 percent retention rate among these employees. With McDonald's owner-operators expressing significant interest, the program is expected to expand to new locations.

"McDonald's has a long history and culture of promoting from within – 70 percent of restaurant managers and 50 percent of U.S. company officers, and even our CEO Jim Skinner, started their careers as crew," said Betsy McKay, director of bilingual leadership for McDonald's. "This program gives immigrants language tools to help them advance in their careers."

McDonald's and the four winners reflect the diverse actors involved in immigrant integration efforts in the public and private sectors. The *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes award \$200,000 annually and were created to encourage the sharing of effective integration practices and raise awareness of the need for greater focus on immigrant integration issues.

The *E Pluribus Unum* national award winners are: the New Americans Integration Initiative, a joint project of the [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) and the [Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#); the [Latino Community Credit Union](#) (Durham, NC); [Tacoma Community House](#) (Tacoma, WA); and [Upwardly Global](#) (San Francisco, CA).

Additional information about the honorees can be found at www.integrationawards.org.

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The Migration Policy Institute is an independent, non-partisan think tank in Washington, D.C. dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national and international levels. For more on MPI, visit: www.migrationpolicy.org.