



May 18, 2010

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Tacoma Community House Earns National Award for Exceptional Immigrant Integration Initiatives

WASHINGTON – The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) on May 18, 2010 announced the four winners of its second annual *E Pluribus Unum* national awards for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives, with a Washington state settlement house now celebrating a 100-year record of service to immigrants and low-income residents receiving a \$50,000 prize.

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.

[Tacoma Community House](#) (TCH) and the three other *E Pluribus Unum* Prize winners were honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on May 18, 2010 featuring national policymakers and elected officials. The winners were selected from nearly 350 applications.

Founded a century ago to help 4,000 Italian immigrants and their children settle in Tacoma, TCH today works with immigrants and refugees from over 80 countries, helping them learn English, become U.S. citizens and contribute to the economic, cultural and civic life of Washington State.

“Tacoma Community House’s long record of exceptional service teaches us both about our country’s proud record of successfully integrating immigrants in the past, and our capacity to do so in the future,” said MPI Senior Vice President Michael Fix, co-director of the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. “With the experience gained from its history and a willingness to change and adapt to meet the needs of the region’s most recent arrivals, TCH is a model for other institutions seeking to create stronger, more vibrant communities across our country.”

In addition to a wide range of community-based education, employment and other integration services, TCH also operates the statewide Literacy NOW Program, which has trained more than 35,000 volunteers who have assisted an estimated 115,000 immigrants at local literacy organizations.

In TCH’s GED preparation, employment and computer classes, immigrants and native-born Americans form connections and learn about each other. TCH’s English programs host field trips to

museums, farmers' markets, movie theaters and other places where immigrants can practice their English in real-world settings and become more familiar with their new communities. Through TCH's American Living class, immigrants learn about American culture, bicultural family issues and community resources.

Over the past decade, TCH has:

- Delivered ESL and educational services to over 13,000 individuals
- Provided immigration and bilingual assistance to some 12,000 immigrants and their families
- Assisted nearly 7,500 individuals with employment training

“Through our collaboration with 450 organizations and businesses and our hundreds of volunteers, we involve the whole community. The goal of integrating immigrants does not just consist of equipping them with the skills they need, it also involves creating a foundation and network of support that allows them to be successful,” said Elizabeth Dunbar, TCH's executive director and chair of the Washington New Americans Policy Council since being appointed by Gov. Christine Gregoire in 2008.

Margie McHugh, co-director of MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, praised the agency's vision through the years and the impressive results of its integrated multi-service approach. “Tacoma Community House was created at the turn of the last century to serve Italian immigrants who were thought at the time to be a health menace, lacking moral fiber and would likely degrade American civilization. Instead TCH has shown, and continues to show, that a small investment in welcoming services yields big payoffs by helping immigrants to learn English, navigate the job market and join the mainstream of American life.”

TCH and the three other winners, each given a \$50,000 award, reflect the diverse actors involved immigrant integration efforts at the state and local levels. The *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes, now in their second year, were created to encourage the sharing of effective integration practices and raise awareness of the need for greater focus on immigrant integration issues.

The other *E Pluribus Unum* national award winners are: the [Latino Community Credit Union](#) (Durham, North Carolina); the New Americans Integration Initiative, a joint project of the [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) and the [Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#); and [Upwardly Global](#) (San Francisco, CA). [McDonald's Corp.](#), headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., received an honorable mention.

Additional information about the winners 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.