



HAPpenings!

HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT

HAP is dedicated to providing attention to the needs and social development of the Hispanic immigrant community via a focus on leadership formation, community organizing and advocacy

Newsletter, July ~ 2013

TIME TO CELEBRATE!

The HAP team has been very busy since April, hosting activities to respond to issues impacting our immigrant community. Alongside 70 other Coalition member organizations in our statewide movement for immigrant rights, we have enjoyed several legislative ‘wins!’ We celebrated together with members and friends on June 22 as part of our 3rd Anniversary Celebration. “We want to express our gratitude to the local HAP committees, volunteers, donors and foundations, all of whom have made possible our work promoting integration with the immigrant community across Western Colorado. We have established greater collaboration with other groups and have found more allies in the community,” said Board President Jose Talavera. **At top right:** Tom Acker, accompanied by members of the HAP Board, speaks about his experiences visiting shepherders. He and Juan Chumacero received the 2013 John Kiernan Award for their commitment to justice through service to Latin American workers – shepherders – in Western Colorado.

Photo at right: members of the Grand Junction HAP Committee who planned & organized the HAP Celebration.



From left to right: the Gasperini Family from Grand Junction; HAP Board President Jose Talavera shares a summary of the past 12 months; *El Valle Lindo Folklorico* enlivens the party at the June 22 celebration

OUR ACTIONS



Photo: Leaders of the local HAP Committees meet with the Honorable Senator Mark Udall May 2nd in Montrose. Concerns were expressed regarding how the proposed legislation for immigration reform addresses health care, education and the economy. Members have also had conversations with the Honorable Senator Michael Bennet’s staff; Sen. Bennet was one of the “Gang of 8” leaders who designed the Senate’s version of federal immigration reform.



Photos: Work meeting in Montrose; Holly Von Helms shares a report on H2A shepherd working conditions with Senator Udall. Both activities took place at the CIRC/HAP office in Montrose.

First photo above: Gov. Hickenlooper signs the Community & Law Enforcement Trust Act following its passage April 26. With this law, Colorado became the first state to reject a hostile law toward immigrants, providing greater stability to the economy and promoting better use of taxpayer funds. **Next photo:** Nelly Garcia explains advances in immigration reform and shares information on how to avoid fraud when seeking immigration assistance.

IMMIGRATION LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Beginning in June, HAP initiated a new legal assistance program for individuals or families needing help with family-based immigration applications, such as residency, citizenship, deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) and other basic applications. This service is being facilitated through an accredited BIA agency (authorized by the U.S. Department of Justice) to help families that cannot afford an attorney that need legal advice to navigate their situation in the complicated U.S. immigration system. Families have already begun to receive help through this program, which strives to fill a need for low-cost immigration legal assistance on the Western Slope. Furthermore, it is part of an effort to combat fraud by *notarios* and other unauthorized agencies offering assistance with immigration applications. “Each month, we will offer private immigration consulta-

tions with an accredited BIA immigration practitioner with over 12 years of experience. We will refer any complicated cases or non-family-based applications to trustworthy, AILA-Colorado attorneys,” explained Nicole Bernal Ruiz, Program Director. *****

Don’t be a victim of immigration fraud!
Only an immigration attorney in good standing or an authorized BIA practitioner is allowed to give legal advice regarding immigration. For more information, please contact the HAP team, or find more information at uscis.gov/avoidscams— 1.800.375.5283.
Notarios are NOT authorized to assist with the completion of immigration forms or give legal advice; unauthorized practice of immigration law is illegal!!!

STORIES OF SHEEPHERDERS

"I felt very lucky when I was offered a job as a shepherd. I was coming to the richest nation in the world where there are many laws to protect all people. I never thought that I would be coming to suffer hunger. During my first summer in the mountains, I was left for 15 days without food. Ironically, I came to care for animals but spent my first 6 months without ever eating a piece of meat. I had never known hunger in my home country because my parents had fields and animals. My first experience of hunger was here in the U.S. I would even watch birds fly back to their nests so I could go eat their eggs.

One time, I was near a city and some missionaries came to read me the Bible. My boss showed up and wanted to know who they were. They told him that they were simply preaching and my boss told them, 'Get out of here. This man has come to work, not to study the Bible.' The missionaries noticed that I was very depressed and decided to return. They asked to join me for a cup of coffee in my camper. When they came inside and saw that I had nothing to eat, they were furious and left immediately to buy me food. It was the first time I was able to eat something recently prepared. I calculated how much my boss was spending on my food; it was exactly \$7 per week, including sodas."

-F. R.

"My name is J.S. Alvarado. I am Peruvian and I came to work as a shepherd in Utah in November of 2012. My boss brought food for me and the animals about every 2 weeks. I asked Western Range Association to move me to another ranch because my food allotment only lasted 9 or 10 days. This is how I ended up in Montrose. A few days after moving here, I became ill with a throat infection, fever and body aches. I began to have problems walking. My boss said I was lying and that I just didn't want to work. I asked him to take me to the doctor and he did, but I'm not sure what the doctor said because my boss was the interpreter. After leaving the clinic, he gave me pills (acetaminophen) and said that I would be ready to work the next day.

One day, the boss's son came and I couldn't walk fast enough, so he punched me in the arm and yelled at me. I have already requested to return to my country. They tell me that I'll have to pay for my plane ticket. The boss deducted \$350 from my check for the doctor's visit and he will also deduct for the 5 days I was unable to care for his sheep."

WAGES

"We've been working as shepherders for 7 years. The salary was always \$720 per month. When we requested a wage



increase, our boss said that business was bad and he couldn't afford it. A few months ago, we told him that we would be returning home when our contract was up, and we would not be coming back. Since we are good workers, he asked us if we would be willing to stay, even though we would lose our visas. He offered to pay us more. Now he pays us \$1,250 and he treats us better. We don't understand how this country works. Now we're undocumented, but we're making more money and are treated with respect..."T.B.



Thanks to generous donations from HAP friends, shepherders receive food, clothing, vitamins and phone cards. They are sometimes prohibited from having phones or receiving visitors. The HAP outreach team takes advantage of the summertime to visit shepherders while they are on public lands and under slightly less control by their bosses.

Photo at left: these workers requested help to "escape" from their ranch. They worked for 2 years for a boss who has had numerous lawsuits and complaints for labor abuses. They decided to flee, and now we don't know where they are.

COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING



HAP is part of the Western Colorado Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking. On June 27, over 70 local leaders from organizations and government agencies participated in the first of a series of human trafficking trainings being offered at Colorado Mesa Uni-

versity. Expert presenters shared information about the growing problem, which mostly affects minority groups in the U.S. The case of shepherders was used as a specific example of potential trafficking in Western Colorado. People who may be experiencing human trafficking endure restrictions on their freedom and/or physical or psychological exploitation in order to obtain financial, sexual or labor benefits. **Anyone can report potential trafficking cases by calling 1-866-455-5075.** Representatives of the State Patrol explained that undocumented people may be afforded certain legal protections if they help law enforcement to identify and pursue criminals. HAP has participated in the Colorado

Project Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Board since 2012, serving as a resource for providing more information throughout the community.



OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



Congratulations to Marketa Zubkova, member of the HAP Board, for being honored with the 2013 Immigrant Liberty Award by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) on May 16th at an event in Denver. In her speech, she expressed gratitude toward HAP for having supporting her development and personal growth as a leader, noting that the experience working with Latin American immigrants has transformed her life.

Photo: Marketa with Martin Zubek, Marjorie Kowalski, Ellen Pedersen and Karen Sherman

Photo below: Tom Acker & Juan Chumacero received the 2013 John Kiernan Award. HAP honors selfless members & friends who make a difference in the lives of others living in Western Colorado. Tom & Juan received the award for their essential contributions to the shepherd project. Outreach could not happen without them! Juan and his wife Aurora have been visiting shepherders for decades in the northwest region of Colorado. Theirs is an incredible witness and example for our community.



HAP bids farewell to Jennifer Lee, attorney with Colorado Legal Services Migrant Worker Division. During the past 7 years with CLS, she has been crucial to promoting public awareness of the problems faced by shepherders, having witnessed the inhumane conditions they endure. She will return to Philadelphia to be near family and direct the Sheller Center for Social Justice at Temple Law School. **Photo:** Jen during her last visit to Western Colorado on June 11

HAP COMMITTEES



Yazmin Molina, Yoselin Cuautli & Lupita Contreras of *Inmigrantes Unidos de Gunnison* participate in a training workshop to organize campaigns for Western Colorado

Photos: members and allies during vigils for reform in Montrose & Grand Junction



OUR STORIES

“My name is Diana de los Santos and I came to the U.S. a year and 7 months ago. I enrolled in school 3 days after arriving and was soon invited to join the National Honor Society. My teachers were surprised that I received this honor after such a short time. I have always enjoyed helping other people, so I became a Spanish and math tutor at school. I did everything I could to show people that Hispanics come here to study and to serve the country that opens its doors to us. I am currently working as Assistant to the Director of the Food Bank Pantry and I volunteer with the Multicultural Center for Gunnison County. I have been a member of the HAP Committee *Inmigrantes Unidos de Gunnison* for a year and a half. Being part of the committee is very important to me because we all work together to change history for future generations. We are committed to fighting for a world with greater justice and respect.

I like to work, learn, read and try to understand life. I



feel that we are all part of America, not because of the color of our skin, but because we walk together to build a better place for all to live. This is America.”

Inmigrantes Unidos de Gunnison is a committee consisting of base community members that was formed in 2006 with the support of HAP and over 50 community members. **Photo:** Members of the committee, with Diana at center.

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