



HAPpenings!

HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT

HAP promotes social integration of the immigrant community in western Colorado through leadership development, community organizing, and providing key services

May 2015

HAP Receives Accreditation to Provide Immigration Legal Assistance

The HAP family celebrates one of the most important achievements in its 9-year history with the founding of an Accredited Immigration Legal Assistance Program. With an official letter from the Department of Justice dated April 15, 2015, HAP became the first organization on the Western Slope authorized to assist individuals with basic, family-based immigration processes, provide legal advice and refer clients to other qualified legal resources based on their needs.

As HAP President, José Talavera said, “because of our limited resources, we will not be able to help all of the families that need it, but we are doing our best to especially help low-income families to obtain work authorization through DACA/DAPA or adjustment of status through residency, as well as citizenship and referrals for other immigration services in Colorado.”

Raquel Oviedo, also of the Board of Directors, said that “this is a great step in our work for integration. Helping our community to attain immigration status on a pathway toward citizenship is a benefit that will impact the economy of our state. HAP will be providing a service that has not yet been provided by any Western Slope organization.”

HAP invites members and allies to make a donation to increase the number of families able to access this service.

“In Colorado, we give immigrants a fair chance”



Recognition and Accreditation from the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) is an authorization available to non-profit organizations and their qualified staff. Accredited representatives must receive sufficient legal training to represent clients before USCIS.

The BIA is the highest administrative body for interpreting and applying immigration laws, and is part of the Department of Justice.

BIA Recognition and Accreditation requests are also reviewed by USCIS and ICE within the Department of Homeland Security.

Thanks to the perseverance of the team and support of our allies, HAP is now a BIA agency.



HAP's BIA Accredited Immigration Legal Representatives

Two HAP employees, Marketa Zubkova of Crested Butte and Nicole Ruiz of Fruita, received legal training over the past two years in preparation for the request for partial accreditation to represent immigrants with family-based petitions; they will begin offering services in May. Marketa, who holds a Master's Degree from Prescott College and a Bachelor's Degree from Western State College, in addition to the equivalent of Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in her native Czech Republic, has been a HAP leader for nearly a decade. In 2013, she received the 8th Annual Immigrant Liberty Awards presented by the Colorado Chapter of the American Association of Immigration Lawyers for her extensive volunteer outreach with H2A range workers. She is the President of *Inmigrantes Unidos*, the local, grassroots Hap committee based in Gunnison.

Nicole holds a Master's Degree and a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Notre Dame, and has worked for HAP as Program Director since 2009, gaining a great deal of experience in immigrant advocacy and integration. She has helped facilitate the Grand Junction *Comite* of grassroots leaders since 2010, and represents HAP on a number of community boards and committees. Nicole has been instrumental in helping to expand HAP's collaborative efforts, especially through *Welcoming Colorado*, immigrant rights work for H2A workers, and has done advocacy work with elected officials around comprehensive immigration reform.

Legal services will be provided at the HAP office in Montrose and at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Grand Junction at 790 26.5 Road. Both have dedicated hundreds of hours of volunteer work to HAP and are a wealth of valuable information. Although their priority is now providing legal assistance, they will continue supporting other HAP programs as part of their advocacy work.



Colorado was built with strong character. Why stop now?

“Nicole and Marketa have a love for the people, and this is what is most important in HAP. Alongside many other leaders, they have helped make the organization what it is today. Working in 6 counties on 7 programs with very limited resources, we have made a difference. We have the good fortune of having people with great values, and we have the ability to incorporate the diversity of gifts brought by each leader. This has been the key to our success,” Ricardo Pérez, Executive Director of HAP.

The Montrose committee

On this occasion we wish to highlight the great work of the Montrose leaders. The last two months have been very busy and the Committee has designed a work plan that includes fundraising, collaborations with agencies and local groups, training in leadership and support of just legislative campaigns.

Thanks to the city council, the Committee is preparing to receive on June 2 the first proclamation by the city, in recognition of the month of June as Immigrant Heritage Month; in the meantime a series of meetings with local agencies is being scheduled as a means of strengthening community participation in issues such as public safety, health and the implementation of state laws.

Finally, we wish to thank the Montrose Committee for its first time donation of \$772.00 to help the legal assistance program BIA. They are scheduling more activities to sponsor and grow this program.

Picture to the right: Meeting with the Director of Innovation & Citizen Engagement City of Montrose, Virgil Turner; other visits that the Committee has received include Tera Wick of the Colorado Trust, Abbie Brewer, the Livewell Montrose-Olathe coordinator and Jessica Jenkins of the Health Equity Program



Combatting Human Trafficking

Some events during the last trimester include:

1. The creation of the Advocate for Culturally Displaced Persons at St. Mary's Hospital, to identify potential victims of HT on the region.
2. A visit by Maria Trujillo, Program Administrator of the Colorado Human Trafficking Council. The team emphasized that labor trafficking occurs constantly in the rural areas.
3. Helping 9 Guatemalans, victims of human trafficking during a month and a half. They were rescued in Pueblo and received aid with the help of CIRC, COVA and the Centro de los Pobres.
4. Collaboration in creating an Action Plan for the next 5 years with the Western Slope Anti Trafficking (WSAT).



**Red de Colorado para Combatir el Trafico Humano—Colorado Network to End Human Trafficking—CONEHT 1-866-455-5075
Toll Free - 24 hours**

Collaborative Work

In a collaboration with the 7th Judicial District and the Resource Center of San Miguel County, we celebrated the National Week of Victims' Rights (April 19-25). An event in Telluride included a "Know Your Rights" training and a visit by the District Attorney Dan Hotsenpiller who took time to converse with immigrants (photo above to the right).

We also had a visit by Ageno Oti and Fred Jabon, representatives from the Chinook Fund. This is a foundation directed by Colorado activists whose mission is to support organizations committed to civic participation for social change. A meeting which included leaders and members of the board of directors took place in Delta May 2 (photo to the right)



The Workers Deserve a Fair Chance

The Department of Labor (DOL) has published a proposal to update obsolete language governing federal H2A sheepherder rules. As the document states, there has been no revision or change in the industry in more than twenty years.

The proposal recommends a gradual increase in salary until reaching 100%, a requirement that the ranchers provide work clothing and equipment and other wage protections.

HAP invites the community to support this proposal. Groups and individuals can make their comments or endorse the proposal, as a good step toward improving the workers' conditions.

At the moment that this bulletin goes to press, the HAP team is helping a worker return to the hospital and receive needed treatment. He received 60 stitches to close an injury to his head. The rancher, his boss, was his interpreter and, according to the medical report, the worker felt in perfect physical condition and able to return to work; nonetheless this worker requested help because of his critical physical condition. A culture of discrimination has kept an industry intact that deprives its foreign workers of their fundamental human rights.

For more information please contact us at HAP's website: info@hapgj.org.



Reforming the Recruitment of Foreign Workers: ending the exploitation.

Legislative Report



For now, the IMPACT Bill (HB 1356- Improving and Maintaining Protections , Accountability and Community Trust Act), did not have the support of some legislators.

IMPACT enjoyed the unanimous support of the Colorado Sheriffs' Association and during testimony not even one person who testified in opposition; nevertheless the state representatives decided to vote it down along party lines, putting that above community wellbeing and justice.

This law would have saved the State of Colorado hundreds of thousands of dollars, it would have improved community collaboration with police, it would have ensured due process, avoiding that people like Bernardo Medina, a member of our community and citizen of the United States be turned over to ICE and end up spending several days incarcerated accused of being undocumented.

The BIA legal assistance program needs financial supporters



Low income families cannot pay the cost of legal assistance when they are required to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 to apply for a change in their immigration status.

Online donations: www.hapgj.org

Or send a check to:

Hispanic Affairs Project (HAP)
300 N. Cascade Avenue Suite C4
Montrose, CO 81401

Your donation can provide the opportunity for a worker to become part of the labor force of western Colorado.

- ◆ \$50 can enable a young person to get a work permit for the first time.
- ◆ \$100 can enable a the father of a family to renew his work or residency permit.
- ◆ \$250 can help an agricultural worker to become a citizen of the United States.

**Give us a chance! Sew hope!
And keep an immigrant family together**



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Return Service Requested