



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 ~ September, 2013

WELCOMING COLORADO

In celebration of National Welcoming Week, HAP's Welcoming Colorado group joined the Mesa County Public Library District Literacy Center and several other organizations in various events, also kicking off Hispanic Heritage Month for the community. One of the main events of the week was a Naturalization Ceremony for 40 new citizens from 20 countries. Immigration officials report that over 6,500 people become citizens in Colorado each year. Sadly, our outdated immigration system has left hundreds of thousands in limbo, waiting for their applications to be processed. Most applications are family-based, and many cases have been filed over a decade ago and continue awaiting their priority date.

"Welcoming Colorado is an initiative involving many groups in Western Colorado, and we are celebrating National Welcoming Week. We value immigrants for everything they contribute to this nation; they bring diversity, work ethic, and family values. For each person who has become a citizen today, there are many who cannot walk down our current pathway to citizenship, and for them, we continue to work," said Nicole Bernal Ruiz at the ceremony. HAP attends monthly naturalization ceremonies host voter registration as part of our civic engagement initiative.

The week also included a presentation by Andrew Lambrecht and Amber Vasek, USCIS officials, who explained the mission of USCIS, the basic processes by which people can apply for immigration benefits, and the resources available to support applicants. They also explained BIA accreditation and the importance of seeking qualified immigration assistance. Throughout the month, other events included National Voter Registration Day, films and telling the history of Latinos in Colorado and in the Grand Valley.



Dancers from *El Valle Lindo* Baile Folklorico group promote Welcoming Colorado in Palisade



Naturalization Ceremony on the Colorado National Monument on September 17

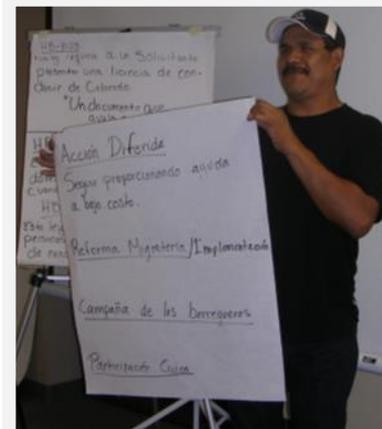


Above: Nicole Bernal Ruiz, Program Director, speaks at the Naturalization Ceremony; Our friend, Lucy Villafana from Olathe, shows off her Brand new Naturalization Certificate.



REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Community representatives participated in the Regional Assembly of Western Colorado on Saturday, August 24. Leaders voted to identify which legislative priorities will be proposed at the Statewide CIRC Assembly October 11-13 in Colorado Springs. Nelly Garcia said, “Many issues affect our community and we should decide which ones are our priorities. If we want to see change, we need to work together at the state level. This is the moment to win the most important issue for our community: immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship.”



From left to right: Joel Flores of Grand Junction leads a session; Rolando Fernandez of Gunnison participates in an educational exercise identifying basic human needs; and Gerardo Martínez of Montrose shares a report from his small group showing the legislative priorities they want to continue supporting.

THE VOTE FOR REFORM

Even though the proposed bill for comprehensive immigration reform enjoyed ample support from the majority of the Senate, it has been met with extensive obstacles in the House of Representatives. Organizations around the state have focused efforts on trying to convince representatives who have not yet given their support, including Congressman Scott Tipton of Dist. 3.



Photo: Karen Sherman - staff, CIRC, John Harold – agricultural leader/owner, ‘Olathe Sweet’ Sweet Corn, Imelda Mulholland – immigration attorney, Rick Baer-Organizing for Action of Grand Junction. These community members testified in favor of a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. at Congressman Tipton’s September 5 Town Hall meeting in Delta.



Photo: Former Border Patrol Agent John Randolph speaks about NAFTA as an economic cause of the massive migration of workers from Mexico to the U.S. since 1994.

Regional actions during this critical moment for reform have included: press conferences, voter registration drives, canvassing, postcard drives and a strong, vocal presence at town hall meetings.

THE BUY COTT

Over 200 business owners in the 3rd Congressional District joined the statewide Buy-Cott campaign led by CIRC and member organizations. We encourage the community to patronize these businesses as a way of thanking them for their support of comprehensive immigration reform. The list of supporting businesses can be found at www.hapgj.org



Photo: Community leaders gather for a training before canvassing to register voters on August 8 in Grand Junction



SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY



With the generous donation of legal expertise *pro bono* by Grand Junction immigration attorney Imelda Mulholland, HAP continues to support young people with **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications**. The next opportunity for students who cannot afford legal representation by an attorney is on October 26. Each month, we host immigration consultations and information meetings to facilitate Legal Assistance with Family-Based Immigration under the direct supervision of a BIA agency. Through the accredited representative, we are able to connect clients with legal advice regarding their cases or refer them for legal representation by a BIA

accredited representative or by an AILA attorney. We are able to facilitate legal advice for people with applications for residency, naturalization, and deferred action for childhood arrivals, and others.

Only an immigration attorney or an accredited BIA representative is authorized to give legal advice.

HAP can provide information regarding social services in the community. Please call 970-249-4115 for info.

HAP offers trainings about rights & responsibilities, protecting oneself from wage theft or immigration fraud, and combatting human trafficking. Contact us to request a presentation.



INTERVIEWS WITH SHEEPHERDERS

Montrose, July 7, 2013

First shepherd

How long have you been working as a shepherd?

Eight months. This is my first contract.

What was your first impression of the U.S. when you arrived?

Very different from what I expected. I arrived at the Montrose airport at about 2:30 p.m. My boss picked me up, took my documents, and took me to his ranch. By 5 p.m., I was already working.

Are you saying that you don't have any identifying documents in your wallet?

That's right. He took my passport and my work permit. That's how they do it. One of my coworkers had his documents returned only after working for a year and a half.

Why do you think they do that?

Maybe they think we're going to escape.

How did you open a bank account?

I don't have a bank account. My boss has all my money. He sends money to my family every month. It's like I'm undocumented here! *(He laughs.)*

Second Shepherd:

What would you like to change about your contract or the treatment you receive as a shepherd?

I would like to have some freedom. It would be a great help to welcome any visitors we would like. The boss doesn't like us to have any visitors. And when someone comes to visit us, like you, we're afraid that our boss will find out. Sometimes they ask if anyone has come to visit. We tell him, "no," so that he doesn't get angry. It would also be good if we could at least have two days off each month. It would make a huge difference in our lives here to be able to go into town and buy what we would like, go to the Laundromat, or eat in a restaurant, because we're always at work, caring for the sheep.

Has your boss ever offered you a day off?

Never! We're always expecting him to show up and ask us to do a job,

including Sundays. If he said to us, "Tomorrow is your day off," it would be a huge change for us because we could rest and be calm.

Does your contract mention days off?

The contract that we signed said that we should be willing to work every day and to go wherever the boss tells us to go.

Has your boss ever taken you to a store?

No. He says that we don't have any reason to go to the store, and that we shouldn't spend money. He says we should save it. He shouldn't prohibit us from spending because it's our money. It's not like we're asking him to spend his money.

And how do you get your food?

The boss brings it to us. Each shepherd makes a list. I think that's why he doesn't want us to go to the store; maybe we'll see a different type of food and then we'll ask for it and then he'll have to say, "no," because it's too expensive and business is very bad right now.

Third Shepherd:

Do you have a cell phone?

Yes, now I have one. But during my first 3-year contract, I borrowed a phone from another guy to call my family each time. When I went to the mountains for 3 months, I lost communication with my family, and they thought I had died or something terrible had happened to me.

Fourth Shepherd:

And do you have a cell phone?

Yes, I bought it a few months before I came, but my boss doesn't know that I have it. He doesn't like us to have phones and he has told us all that we have no need to talk to anyone.

What else do you lack here?

We would like to have a shower. We have water and electricity, but we need a shower.

"I came to the country where the UN headquarters is housed; I never thought that human rights would be violated here. I've come to work at the request of my employer. We have not done anything wrong."



A radio or cell phone is a basic tool necessary for any job out in the wilderness, yet it is prohibited by some bosses.



The *Salt Lake Tribune* published a disturbing story on September 5 about a Peruvian named Hugo Macha who was attacked by an elk. He walked for 5 hours, bleeding and with an injured lung, to find help from another shepherd. The other shepherd managed to find Forest Service agents, who had him transferred by helicopter to the Grand Junction hospital. This type of situation shows the vulnerable conditions created by isolation, lack of communication, and safe working conditions for shepherders.

Weak legislation regulating the industry has led to decades of abuse for shepherders, that could be considered human trafficking by any UN member nation.



NEW HAP MEMBERS

“My name is Basilio Collado. I was born in Santander, Spain. I came to the U.S. to work as a shepherd on February 15, 1969. As soon as I arrived, my employer took my contract and asked me to pay him for my flight from Spain to the USA; the industry agency had promised that my flight was paid for as part of my contract. This is how my life here began. It was a very difficult experience, and **I see that things have not changed at all.** Shepherders have a very hard life, and the amount of abuses they

endure is unacceptable. I was somewhat fortunate to be Spanish, but I see the abuse suffered by the Peruvians, Chileans, Bolivians and Mexicans.

I don't understand the reason for humiliating them and treating them as if they aren't human beings.

Now I am a volunteer with HAP; I visit shepherders to support them because they endure the same experiences I had for many years. And I'm not afraid to tell the truth if I must speak out.”



Basilio leans on a tree where he carved his name in 1988 when he was still a shepherd

COLLABORATIVE WORK



HAP members attended the **2013 Latino Strategy Summit** hosted by Senator Michael Bennet, the Metro State University of Denver and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Denver. “It was a great opportunity to envision the future for our community, and to thank Senator Bennet for being one of the ‘Gang of Eight’ who developed the Senate proposal for comprehensive immigration reform,” said José Ávila of Delta.

Right: Mike Archuleta of the **Western Colorado Latino Chamber of Commerce** presents Karen Sherman with the 1st Annual Hispanic Achievement Award on September 16 at the Central Library in Grand Junction for her work to promote integration in our communities. She is a founding member of HAP and currently serves as a Board Director of the National Welcoming America Initiative.



Above: Western Colorado Congress celebrates its 33rd anniversary with the annual membership assembly to determine the legislative priorities for 2014. HAP and WCC work together on leadership development and civic engagement, connecting our common interests in the West.



Leaders and social service agencies attend one of 4 informational sessions regarding Equity in Health with a focus on minority groups as part of the **LiveWell Montrose/Olathe** coalition.

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Return Service Requested

WE WANT TO THANK.....

- ◆ Tequila's Family Mexican Restaurant, DJ Faraón, DJ Alex and the HAP GJ Fundraising Committee for hosting a dance to benefit the Immigration Legal Assistance program for low-income families.
- ◆ Mesa County Public Library District Literacy Center in Grand Junction for their work with Welcoming Colorado, and for hosting many programs to promote integration.
- ◆ Businesses and individuals who are supporting comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship, especially those who testified in public meetings with our District Congressman.
- ◆ Imelda Mulholland, Esq. for donating time and expertise to review Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications, providing legal advice to young people hoping to apply for work permits.