



“To connect and empower immigrants with resources to achieve legal documentation, fulfill their economic needs, and integrate into the community.”

Reuniting Families - Mother and Son Reunited after 10 Years Apart

Inside this issue:

DACA Renewals	2
Reuniting (cont.)	2
Summer Program	3
Recognition (cont.)	3
Luna Itzel	3
Staff Reflection	4

Every day parents in Latin America are forced to leave their children behind in the pursuit of a financially viable future free of violence. As these parents make the long and arduous journey to the United States, creating a safe home where they can eventually bring their children in order to provide them a better future is their primary goal. For many, however, the separation lasts much longer than they had hoped and often families are separated by borders indefinitely.

For Maria* her separation from her son in Guatemala lasted much longer than she had hoped as well.

Maria left her son David* with her parents in Guatemala ten years ago. As he cried for her not to leave him, she promised that she would come back for him. Her intention was to go to the U.S. and create a steady and safe home to which she could bring David to. That journey had many more twists and turns than she could have ever expected.

Maria first made her way to Florida in 2004, where she lived for five years and had her first daughter in 2005. In 2007 she gave birth to another son. In 2009 she moved to Colorado with her current partner. After a couple of years in Colorado her partner began to drink

more and more. With the drinking came abuse towards both Maria, and the two children.

Maria, although fearing for herself due to her undocumented status, stood up for herself and her children and reported the abuse. Maria left the abuser and he was prosecuted.

Due to Maria's cooperation and participation in the case against her offender, Maria had the opportunity to apply for legal status under a U-Visa.

*Names changed for client confidentiality

-See Reuniting, Pg 2

IRC Receives Statewide Recognition

The IRC was recognized by CCASA (Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault) as an outstanding organization working against sexual assault, specifically in Latino populations. Every year CCASA commemorates April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This year they began with a Kick-off at the Capital on

April first. At that event, the IRC was chosen as one of two organizations in the state to be highlighted for their services

-See Recognition, Pg 3



IRC employees Roxanne Reimer (left) and Carmen Stevens (middle) with award recipient Debra Sowards-Cerny (right).

Dreams Renewed - IRC Begins Submitting DACA Renewals

On June 15, 2012 President Obama issued the presidential memorandum known as DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). This allows people who would have qualified under the DREAM Act, to gain work permission and thus work legally in the United States. It also defers action on their deportation. Dreamers were first able to apply for DACA on August 15, 2012. Since then the IRC has submitted 189 applications for DACA, all of which have been approved.

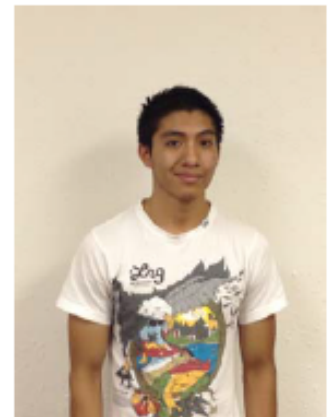
It may seem that DACA does not accomplish much for these young people, and certainly it is only one tiny step on the road to immigrant justice. However for the people receiving DACA, it can change the reality of how they've been forced to live as an *undocu-*

mented immigrant. Dreamers no longer have to live with the constant fear of deportation. They now have the ability to get a driver's license, and a social security card. With these seemingly small things they have the potential to legally help support their family or save money for their education.

It has now been almost two years since the first applications were processed and as DACA lasts for two years, this means that it is now time for those who received DACA to start renewing their applications. The regulations for reapplying were released by USCIS on June 6th, and the IRC has already begun with its first renewals.

Although the renewal process still involves the same

\$465 filing fee as the original application, it is somewhat easier than the initial process and requires less evidence to be submitted. So far the IRC has submitted three of these renewal applications.



DACA Recipient Tomas Nolasco (Story to be featured in next newsletter)

“However for the people receiving DACA, it can change the reality of how they've been forced to live as an *undocumented* immigrant.”

Reuniting Families (*cont.*)

With the help of the IRC Maria's U-Visa was approved. She can now live and work legally in the United States, but beyond that, she was also able to apply for her son David to come to the U.S. as a derivative of her case. On April 1, 2014 Maria along with IRC employees Car-

men Stevens and Roxanne Reimer had the great joy and privilege of picking David up from Denver International Airport. After ten years of being separated, Maria and David were finally reunited.

Since then David has had the chance to meet his two younger siblings, start to

learn English, and attend school in Alamosa. He is enjoying life in the U.S. with his mother, and Maria is certainly enjoying being with her son as well.

Tierra Nueva Summer Program

During the school year the IRC supports an after school tutoring program for the children living at the Tierra Nueva Housing Complex in Alamosa. But why stop just because the school year is over? Instead even more activities are provided for the kids.

Zoila and Norma Gomez, long time leaders of the program begin an exercise program called "Run with Us" every summer. Together, Zoila and Norma have been providing this healthy activity to the children there for three years now. They have once again started this program with the kids for the summer of 2014.

Another focus over the summer is reading. Kids

don't have homework, but they still need to keep up on their reading. Norma and Roxanne Reimer (IRC Staff) make sure that happens. Norma reads with the smaller children at least a few times a week and Roxanne leads a reading and discussion group with the older kids. The summer reading program has been in place for three years.

This year, Tierra Nueva's summer program has another exciting addition as well. Beatriz Garcia Waddell (IRC Board Vice President and Local Foods Coalition Employee) is leading a Cooking Matters course for the kids. Through this course the kids get to learn about nutrition and learn how to



Kids making smoothies

prepare healthy food.

The IRC is excited that so many fun and healthy activities are being offered to our kids, and that we have so many great volunteers and partners offering these activities. New volunteers are always welcome as well, so please contact us if you have any interest in helping out.

"The kids get to learn about nutrition and learn how to prepare healthy food."

Statewide Recognition (cont.)

to Latino victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

IRC Employees Carmen Stevens and Roxanne Reimer traveled to the capital building in Denver for the Kick-off to talk about the mission and programs of the IRC.

The event also featured talented slam poets and awards were given out as well. One award, for Rural Media Excellence, went to Alamosa resident Debra Sowards-Cerny.

The kick-off was a large success with many in attendance including senators,

representatives and many others involved in our state and/or national government.

IRC Hosts Luna Itzel

On June 27, 2014 the IRC had the privilege to host Luna Itzel. Itzel is an accomplished artist from Mexico. Her career in performing traditional Mexican song and dance has now lasted for 14 years. Itzel was generous enough to agree to come to Alamosa to perform.

Itzel's beautiful performance was hosted at Cal-

villo's Mexican Restaurant on Friday evening. Calvillo's was also generous in donating the space for the event. Thank you to all who attended and/or supported this event!



Luna Itzel

Staff Reflection - Flora Archuleta, Executive Director

Want to help support the mission of the IRC? Go to www.slvirc.com and click on the Donate online link or drop by our office!

I have been working at the San Luis Valley Immigrant Resource Center for the past thirteen years as the Executive Director and Accredited Representative. The last thirteen years have probably been the most rewarding years of my career working in non-profit organizations. Over the years I have had the pleasure of working with some wonderful people, which include board and staff members, volunteers, and college interns. I believe that this has contributed to the success of the San Luis Valley Immigrant Resource Center. I have also gotten to know the immigrant community and I consider

many as not only my clients, but also my friends. The majority of the immigrants who come to the San Luis Valley Immigrant Resource Center trust the organization and rely on



Flora Archuleta - Executive Director of the IRC

the assistance we are able to provide. Over the years I have witnessed people obtain legal residence, become naturalized citizens, learn the English language and transition from working in agriculture to working at the hospital, colleges, and local businesses. It is extremely gratifying to know these people have become successful and productive members of our local communities. I find coming to work every day as truly rewarding and would find it hard doing something else.

The San Luis Valley Immigrant Resource Center (SLVIRC) is a unique organization and has a long history of working with immigrants. It has been an informal resource center for immigrants in the area since 1987. One of several programs created by San Luis Valley Christian Community Services, the Immigrant Assistance Program grew out of low-income immigrants' need for assistance in filling out essential applications for political asylum, amnesty, and other legal status. In February 2003, the San Luis Valley Immigrant Resource Center received 501 (c) (3) status with the Internal Revenue Service, and is currently an independent non-profit located in Alamosa, Colorado, serving the entire San Luis Valley and beyond.

SLVIRC serves a geographically remote area in south-central Colorado, which is roughly the size of Connecticut. The area is home to more than 40,000 residents and 10,000 migrant and seasonal workers. The population is almost 50% Hispanic, and there are more than 400 Q'anjob'al Indigenous Mayan (Guatemalans) living in the San Luis Valley. It is one of Colorado's poorest regions, with much of the population living below the poverty level. Two of the valley's six counties are the poorest in the state and among the poorest in the nation. The majority of the clientele served are of Mexican or Guatemalan descent.

The IRC currently has three programs working towards our mission. The first continues to be Immigration Legal Assistance which assists immigrants in completing essential immigration paperwork. The second is Por ti Misma through which the IRC assists battered immigrants and crime victims in achieving legal status. The third program of the IRC is Punto de Vista, which provides English tutoring to immigrants, Spanish courses to community service providers, and an after school tutoring program for immigrant children.



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