



Fall 2017

Neighbors Link



VOLUME 27

OUR MISSION: To strengthen the whole community by actively enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants **OUR STRATEGY:** Educate, Empower, Employ

Neighbors Link Leads the Way in Uncertain Times for Immigrants



Andrea Alarcon, Neighbors Link staff member and DACA recipient, has spoken publicly about her experience as a young immigrant dealing with difficult changes to immigration policy in our country. She will also be speaking at the Latin Links luncheon on November 1st.

These are troubling times for many in the immigrant community. Think about DACA recipients worrying that changing guidelines will impact their schooling or employment. Imagine parents having to decide who will care for their children if they are deported. In the wake of policy shifts impacting the immigrant community, the demand for Neighbors Link advocacy and services is on the rise. Neighbors Link is addressing community uncertainty by significantly expanding existing services, as well as launching new programming.

In the past year, Neighbors Link has provided Community Education trainings to 1,650 clients and providers. These training sessions educate immigrant residents and community service organizations on immigrant rights under the U.S. Constitution, particularly in relation to interacting with law enforcement or immigration agents.

Neighbors Link has also launched a series of Family Safety

Planning workshops. These are designed to help parents create a plan to determine who will care for their children in the event they are detained or deported, and what important information caregivers must have to protect their children and increase the likelihood of family reunification.

Neighbors Link has been vigilant in responding to changes in immigration policy. The recent announcement that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program will be ending has left many DACA recipients with questions about the future. The DACA program allowed certain undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as children to live and work here legally for a renewable period of two years.

“The typical DACA recipient came to this country when they were six years old, and this is their country,” said Carola Bracco, Executive Director of Neighbors Link. Neighbors Link Community Law Practice offered numerous DACA information sessions and clinics to answer questions and process renewals after the repeal was announced. “It was a lot of work in a short amount of time,” she said. “It was a huge strain on the nonprofit sector to help people do these DACA renewals. But we always stand ready to help.”

In addition to helping the immigrant community deal with imminent threats to themselves or their families, Neighbors Link remains committed to enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants throughout our entire community. An important component of this is cultural competency trainings—designed to share facts and minimize myths and stereotypes about immigrants—for faith-based groups, health care workers, social service providers, educators and law enforcement agencies. Neighbors Link will continue to expand these trainings to build trust and open lines of communication throughout our entire community.



In response to increased need, Neighbors Link has expanded its array of informational workshops and training sessions for immigrants and community service providers.



Above, members of the first cohort of Pipeline Scholars have dedicated themselves to the program since the fifth grade. They graduated from Fox Lane High School in June.



Many supportive community members collaborate to help our students succeed. They are representatives from our schools, police department, Neighbors Link, the Westchester County Public Safety Department, and the Boys and Girls Club of Northern Westchester.

First Pipeline Scholars Class Graduates and Looks to the Future

It was a rewarding moment when the members of the first cohort of our Neighbors Link Pipeline Scholars program walked across the Fox Lane High School graduation stage in June.

In 2009, Neighbors Link and the Bedford Central School District launched Pipeline Scholars, a program designed to support parents and their children as they advance from fifth grade through high school graduation and beyond. The students selected for this program are challenged to overcome considerable obstacles in order to reach their educational potential. Neighbors Link is grateful to the Bedford Central School District, our long-term partner in this program, with whom we have collaborated to help these students succeed.

We are extremely proud of our first Pipeline graduates, Jose, Wilson, Rolando, Walter and Ariel, who have worked incredibly hard to make it to this point. We are excited to see them embrace the plans they have developed for their futures, including furthering their education by attending college.

This fall, six fifth graders will enter the Pipeline Scholars program in Mount Kisco and a new cohort of Pipeline Scholars will launch in Ossining, keeping the cycle of success rolling onward.

Neighbors Link Receives Legal Services Grants

With demand for our legal services on the rise, Neighbors Link is grateful to have recently received two significant grants to support this important work.

With designated funds from The Westchester Community Foundation and the New York Immigration Coalition, our Neighbors Link Community Law



Practice legal team will continue to meet the growing need in our communities to assist clients with an array of legal services designed to inform and empower immigrants. Contributions from individual donors have also substantially impacted our ability to expand our outreach to clients.

ONA Community Navigator Grant to Fund Training

Neighbors Link has been awarded a Community Navigator Grant from the New York State Office for New Americans. In this time of uncertainty regarding federal immigration policies, this grant will help people understand changing policies and plan for the health and safety of their families.

Of key importance during this time of growing distrust of institutions, the Immigrant Community Navigator will work with local and county government, police, schools, and faith-based

organizations throughout Westchester County to help them better understand the perspectives of immigrants, using Neighbors Link's cultural proficiency training.





PRODUCE PROGRAM

Below, Neighbors Link is partnering with InterGenerate as part of our Salud Real initiative to connect our clients to local sustainable agriculture. Our Client Council has been an integral part of organizing and running the produce program.



Neighbors in the News

UNITY MARCH

Above, hundreds of people gathered in support of immigrants at the Mount Kisco Unity March and Rally on May 7th. Right, a mother and daughter proudly wear flags of both their original and new home countries.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Neighbors Link is providing ongoing training sessions, below, to educate immigrant residents on their rights when interacting with law enforcement, immigration agents or if questioned about their immigration status.



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Mount Kisco Historian and Trail Project team leader Harry McCartney, above, spoke to parents and children in the Parent-Child Together Program about the many different birds and animals that live in Mount Kisco.



Summer Interns Make a Difference

Neighbors Link was lucky to have two outstanding student interns working with us over the past summer.

Abby Nimetz, who lives in Chappaqua and attends Duke University, served as a program intern at the center. Her role was to organize client data and analyze results from various user surveys, in the hopes of streamlining our questionnaires and attaining the most accurate information possible.

In addition to getting to know client families, Abby said she enjoyed interacting with Neighbors Link's staff. "Working beside them taught me the importance of believing in your job and having a strong work ethic. They each showed such remarkable dedication and contributed to a positive working environment.

When Neighbors Link became involved in the case of Diego Puma, the 19-year-old Ossining high school senior who was deported to Ecuador this summer, Abby noted, "I was inspired by how the staff and the rest of the immigrant community took action and put everything they had into helping this family."

Olivia Hoffman, who lives in Newtown and attends Boston College, coordinated volunteers for the Summer Links program and served as a teacher aide. Olivia said she loved being with the students and their families, and has developed a deep interest in the culture, issues and obstacles of the people she worked with.

Getting to know their "interesting and sometimes heartbreaking stories" was a very formative experience for Olivia who, like Abby, is a psychology major.

"When we talk about immigration, it's dangerously easy to label people," she said. "You don't know what people are going through until you hear their stories. Neighbors Link expanded my understanding and taught me to be generous and give everyone the benefit of the doubt."



Our First Staffer Comes Full Circle

Neighbors Link's very first staffer, hired in 1999, is excited to be back and working with the Neighbors Link Community Law Practice.

Liliana Keith, who is now administrator and paralegal to the Neighbors Link legal team, was originally hired nearly twenty years ago "to help find a space and adapt it to whatever might become the Center."

In the intervening years, she worked in nonprofit, business administration and law, always trying to do work that "helped people."

Two decades later, she says, "It is so amazing to see Neighbors Link all grown, but its essence is the same. I admire its guiding principles, and am very pleased to be back, to have come full circle."

Liliana speaks admiringly of the two attorneys in the practice and marvels at the heavy caseload they handle. In her role, she assists in preparing cases, sometimes speaking with clients in their native language to answer their questions and help them make a strategy for protecting themselves and their families in case of detention or separation.

"Because you never know tomorrow what will be in the headlines next," she said, the law practice must prepare for many eventualities, each approach taking many months in the immigration pipeline.

"I do respect very much what Neighbors Link is about," Liliana notes. "It represents the values of this country. This is how you help people, enrich your community and make things better."

Myth 1: Immigrants don't pay taxes

REALITY:

- Undocumented immigrants are taxpayers - they pay sales and property taxes and many pay income taxes. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) released a study showing that undocumented immigrants across the U.S. paid an estimated \$11.84 billion in state and local taxes in 2012.
- The Social Security Administration estimates that undocumented immigrants contribute about \$12 billion each year to the cash flow of the program without receiving benefits in return because of their status.
- In New York, undocumented immigrants contribute over \$1 billion in state and local taxes annually.

Myth 2: Immigrants aren't learning English

REALITY:

- Immigrants in the United States today are actually learning English slightly faster than their predecessors. Sixty-six percent of immigrants who speak a foreign language at home can also speak English "very well" or "well," according to a new study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.
- The most significant determinant of whether or not immigrants learn a new language is their age at the time of entry. Immigrants who arrive as young children learn a second language quickly while adults find it much more challenging.
- 89% of native born Hispanics in the U.S. speak English well

Myth 3: Immigrants take jobs from native-born residents

REALITY:

- Immigrants do not generally compete with U.S. born workers. Instead, immigrants usually compete with the migrants who came before them.
- Many immigrants with legal authorization to work here are highly skilled and sought after by U.S. companies because of shortages in the native-born skill base. Economists find that highly skilled immigrants have a

significant positive impact on creating new jobs in the United States.

- Undocumented immigrants often fill the lowest rung of employment in construction, agriculture and domestic services. Studies show that low-skilled immigrant workers and low-skilled native-born workers take on very different jobs, with native-born workers taking jobs that require work authorization and English language skills.

Myth 4: Undocumented immigrants receive extensive public benefits

REALITY:

- Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for welfare, food stamps, Medicaid or most other public benefits.
 - Documented immigrants cannot receive most benefits until they have been in the United States for more than five years.
- Undocumented immigrants can receive schooling and emergency medical care. A recent report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce states that "economists view expenditures on healthcare and education for children as investments that pay off later, when those children become workers and taxpayers."
 - Numerous studies have found that immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in government services and benefits.



Immigration Myths & Realities

Myth 5: Immigrants are bringing a crime wave to the U.S.

REALITY:

- Decades of research has shown that immigrants are less likely to commit serious crimes than native-born citizens.
- High rates of immigration are associated with lower rates of violent crime and property crime. This holds true for both documented and undocumented immigrants.
- From 1990 - 2013, immigration in the United States increased significantly, including the number of undocumented immigrants, which more than tripled. During that time, the violent crime rate in this country declined 48%.

For sources or to sign up to receive additional myths and realities, visit <https://www.neighborslink.org/issues/immigration-myths-and-realities>

WORKERS AVAILABLE AT NEIGHBORS LINK

Skilled and general labor available: House and Yard Clean-Up, Moving Help, Housekeeping, Snow Shoveling, Painters, Home Companions, Carpenters, Masons, Party Help and more



Neighbors Link Worker Center is open 365 days a year, 7am-10pm
 27 Columbus Avenue, Mount Kisco, NY 10549
 914-666-3410 • www.neighborslink.org



Umran Beba is Senior Vice President and Chief HR Officer for PepsiCo Global Human Capital Management Services and Operations.

LATIN LINKS SERIES 2017

Wednesday Nov. 1st, 11:30

Luncheon & Presentation
 Old Oaks Country Club, 3100 Purchase St.
 Purchase, NY 10577

An Immigrant Woman Conquers the Corporate World

The story of a Turkish immigrant's success in business and how she harnessed the power of women to strengthen corporate America.

Purchase tickets at www.neighborslink.org. For more information please contact Mary Vinton at (914) 666-3410 ext. 14 or mvinton@neighborslink.org



Also hear from Andrea Alarcon, Neighbors Link staff member and DACA recipient

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27 Columbus Avenue
 Mount Kisco, NY 10549
 Tel: 914-666-3410
www.neighborslink.org

