JERSEY CITY OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

JERSEY CITY Monthly Newsletter
OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2014 - ISSUE 2

01 JERSEY CITY'S 2ND NATURALIZATION CEREMONY

Mayor Steven M. Fulop, the Municipal Council, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in partnership with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services hosted their second Naturalization Ceremony in City Hall on Friday, November 7th, 2014 at 10:00am. During this ceremony, which was held in honor of Veterans Day, 30 citizenship candidates were naturalized as U.S. citizens in City Hall's Council Chambers; 25 of these candidates were Jersey City residents and the remaining five candidates were residents of New Jersey and either active members or veterans of the United States military.

The 30 naturalization candidates originated from the following 15 countries: the United Kingdom, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, India, Thailand, Sierra Leone, Philippines, Ghana, Slovakia, Guyana, Colombia, Morocco, and Pakistan. The 63rd Army Band's Brass Quintet performed the National Anthem and a Tribute to the Armed Forces at the conclusion of the ceremony. A presentation of the colors was administered by a joint color guard comprised of members of Seton Hall University's Army ROTC Pirate Battalion, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst's Air Force Honor Guard, and the Marine Corps 6th Communication Battalion's Color Guard.

This ceremony was held as part of USCIS's annual celebration of Veterans Day. USCIS welcomed more than 3,000 new citizens in recognition of this year's holiday from November 7-14 at nearly 40 naturalization ceremonies across the country.

02 FALL DIVERSITY FESTIVAL

On October 5th, 2014 JC Families hosted their First Annual Fall Diversity Festival from 10AM to 2PM in Hamilton Park.

This unique and special event was a great opportunity for children and families to learn more about the vibrant and diverse communities that comprise Jersey City.

There was an array of fun activities for the whole family, including face painting, pumpkin picking and decorating, arts and crafts, live musical acts and dance performances presented by Kerri Smith Academy of Irish Dance, Tarik Sultan Belly Dancing, Bollywood Funk NYC, Caribbean Soul Dancers, and more.

A variety of delicious food, that represented the diversity of Jersey City, was also provided by a number of vendors including Blue Lotus, Me Casa Su Casa, Stella's Empanadas & Argentine Grill, Carmella Italian Street Fare, and Chopping Block.

This event was sponsored by JC Families, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the Office of Cultural Affairs, the Hamilton Park Neighborhood Association, and CarePoint Health.

03 OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION'S FIRST HOLIDAY BOOK DRIVE

The holiday season is quickly approaching, and every year Jersey City holds its Annual Toy Drive to help families in need bring a little holiday cheer to their children.

Last year, the Toy Drive distributed over 1,000 toys to children throughout Jersey City. This year the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is holding its 1st Annual Holiday Book Drive and our goal is to provide a new book to every child who receives a toy through Jersey City's 18th Annual Toy Drive.

We will be collecting NEW books, in either English or Spanish, to distribute to Jersey City children ages 1 to 12 years at the 18th Annual Toy Drive to be held on Friday December 19th, 2014 in City Hall.

If you would like to help us meet our goal and bring holiday cheer to the children of Jersey City, please bring your new book donations to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, located in Room 106 in City Hall.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2014 IMPORTANT DATES

Monday Nov. 17th – Jersey City's 18th Annual Toy Drive Registration Begins in the Resident Response Center @ 9AM

Thursday Nov. 27th and **Friday Nov. 28th** – Thanksgiving Weekend (Municipal Offices CLOSED)

Friday Dec. 12th – Last day to drop of toy or book donations to the Resident Response Center

Friday Dec. 19th – Jersey City's 18th Annual Toy Drive @ 6:00PM in the Council Chambers

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04 USCIS ALERT: DHS TO IMPLEMENT HAITIAN FAMILY REUNIFICATION PAROLE PROGRAM

Starting in early 2015, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will begin implementation of a Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program to expedite family reunification for certain eligible Haitian family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents of the U.S. and to promote safe, legal and orderly migration from Haiti to the United States.

Under this program U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will offer certain eligible Haitian beneficiaries of already approved family-based immigrant visa petitions, who are currently in Haiti, an opportunity to come to the United States up to approximately two years before their immigrant visa priority dates become current.

"The rebuilding and development of a safe and economically strong Haiti is a priority for the United States. The Haitian Family Reunification Parole program promotes a fundamental underlying goal of our immigration system – family reunification. It also supports broader U.S. goals for Haiti's reconstruction and development by providing the opportunity for certain eligible Haitians to safely and legally immigrate sooner to the United States," said Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas. "The United States strongly discourages individuals in Haiti from undertaking life-threatening and illegal maritime journeys to the United States. Such individuals will not qualify for the HFRP program and if located at sea may be returned to Haiti."

Legal authority for the HFRP program is provided under the Immigration and Nationality Act which authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to parole into the United States certain individuals, on a case-by-case basis, for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. This is the same legal authority used to establish the Cuban Family Reunification Parole program in 2007. USCIS is not currently accepting HFRP program applications, and potential beneficiaries should not take any action at this time. USCIS will provide full program details before the end of this calendar year and stakeholder engagements will take place shortly thereafter. In early 2015, the Department of State National Visa Center (NVC) will begin contacting certain U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents with approved petitions for Haitian family members, offer them the opportunity to apply to the program, and provide instructions on how to apply. Only individuals who receive a written notice of program eligibility from NVC will be eligible to apply.

Under the Haitian Family Reunification Parole program, Haitians authorized parole will be allowed to enter the United States and apply for work permits but will not receive permanent resident status any earlier. Visit www.uscis.gov/avoidscams for tips on filing forms, reporting scams, and finding accredited legal services. Remember, the Wrong Help Can Hurt! An informational brochure and flyer are also available on www.uscis.gov.

For more information on USCIS and its programs, please visit www.uscis.gov

05 CELEBRATION OF HISPANIC HERITAGE

06 JERSEY CITY'S CELEBRATION OF HISPANIC HERITAGE

Mayor Steven M. Fulop, Councilman -at - Large Daniel Rivera and The Office of Diversity and Inclusion hosted a Celebration of Hispanic Heritage in honor of National Hispanic Heritage Month on Friday October 10th, 2014 in City Hall's Council Chambers. National Hispanic Heritage Month was created to recognize the important contributions of the Hispanic community in the United States and to celebrate their rich heritage and cultural traditions.

This event was a wonderful celebration that truly showcased the Hispanic community of Jersey City. The ceremony featured a performance by Cuban-American opera singer, Giselle Bellas, who sang the National Anthem, a traditional dance ensemble from Liberty High School, a women's salsa dance team from Salsa Fever on2 Dance Academy and a fashion show of traditional attire representing each country was provided by Strike a Pose Studio. Also during the ceremony, several individuals from the Hispanic community were honored for their leadership and contributions.