



# New Americans

An occasional newsletter from the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees

*New Americans, Fall 2011, Volume 6, Number 3*

## Baltimore Orientation Center Opens

*(Photo: Ada Sonnenfeld for MORA)*

This summer the Baltimore Orientation Center (BOC) opened as an “across the street annex” to the Baltimore Resettlement Center (BRC). The BOC will house the latest initiative of Baltimore’s Public-Private Partnership—the Cultural Orientation Program. Newly arriving refugees are rarely familiar with services, culture, and facilities in the US. To help them navigate this strange environment, the orientation program brings together refugees from the same country and provides essential information in their native language in a format that is easily understood regardless of educational background. Classes include social activities, games and discussion.



***Refugee Youth Program Volunteer Specialist Moira Fratantuono (in green) speaks with Betty Symington, Executive Director of Baltimore’s Episcopal Refugee and Immigration Center Alliance (ERICA), at the opening of the Baltimore Orientation Center.***

Sara Bedford is currently the Center’s Cultural Orientation Coordinator. In preparation for this position, Sara spent several weeks at IRC’s Resettlement Support

***New Americans*** is an e-newsletter intended as an occasional companion to the ***MORA Memo***. It features brief news items on refugee resettlement and immigration issues in the region.

Center in Thailand and Malaysia. There she observed Cultural Orientation classes attended by refugees prior to their departure for the US. Previously, Sara worked as a case worker and logistics coordinator with the IRC in Baltimore for two and a half years. Sara also spent two years with the IRC in Boston working with Somali-Bantu women and children, has done research with refugees in Cameroon and the Central African Republic, and taught youth in Ghana. Sara graduated from Boston College with a Bachelors degree in International in International Studies.

Sara notes, "I am pleased to work among staff who consider orientation and refugee services a mission and a passion, something to be constantly improved and adapted as we learn from each other and our refugee clients!"

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***Sara Bedford with Bishnu Bhakta Sitaula from Bhutan, at the IRC Cultural Orientation Graduation held at Patterson Park in July, 2011.***

(Photo: Ada Sonnenfeld for MORA)



***International flags fly over Baltimore Orientation Center in Highlandtown.***

(Photo: Ada Sonnenfeld for MORA)



### **Maryland Receives Refugee Mental Health Grant**

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (MDHMH) Office of Immigrant Health (OIH) has been awarded a Refugee Preventive Health Discretionary Grant. This grant, funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), is for \$112,020 a year for 3 years, starting August 15, 2011.

The proposed project, titled, "Mental Health Service Support at Maryland Resettlement Centers," supports a pilot program between OIH, the BRC and the Johns Hopkins Bayview Community Psychiatric Program (JHBCPP). A licensed certified clinical social worker (CSW) will be based part-time at the BRC to provide mental health evaluations and referrals for clients in need of intensive individual treatment. The social worker will also conduct group sessions to provide general mental health education and coping strategies to clients, and assist in the development of community-based education and training activities. This grant will also help cover costs for project coordination and interpretation for on-site mental health admissions, group work, and educational sessions.

Years two and three of the project will include specific efforts to connect local community leaders and health care providers with Baltimore's different refugee populations in a program of mental health education to those communities. The goal is to help and encourage individuals from cultures where concepts of mental health and health seeking behaviors either do not exist or differ starkly from Western models.

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### **MORA Welcomes Janice Stucke**

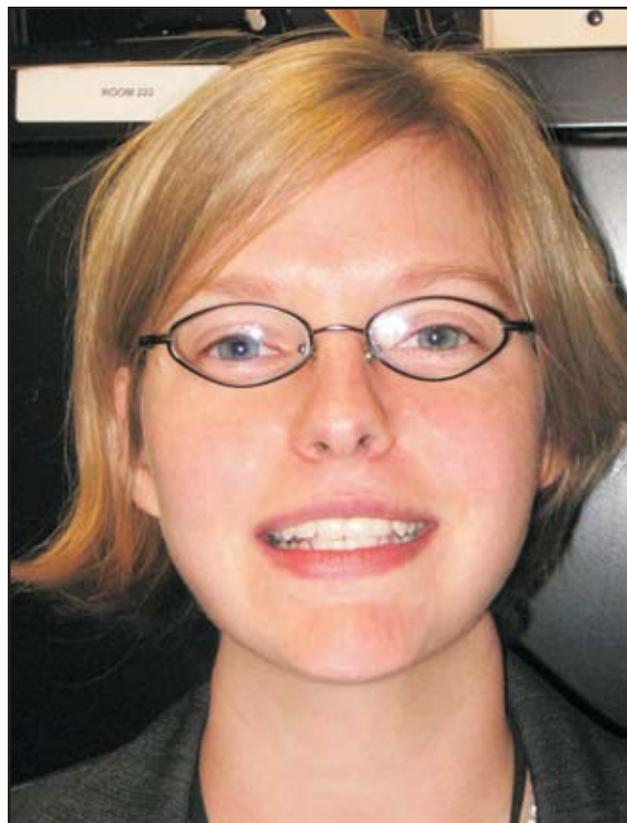
The Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees is proud to announce the addition of our new Program Manager, Janice Stucke. Janice, who began her position in late August, comes to us from the International Rescue Committee in Silver Spring, where she was the Employment Specialist Supervisor, overseeing both the Road to Self Sufficiency and Match

Grant employment programs.

Janice holds a graduate degree in International Relations from the University of California, San Diego, with an emphasis on public policy and development. She received her bachelor's degree from the George Washington University with a major in Asian Studies and a minor in economics. Prior to her graduate studies, she worked as a paralegal and researcher in a Washington, D.C. law firm where she specialized in international litigation and pro-bono immigration law. Janice also worked for Catholic Charities, San Diego, as the Cultural Orientation Coordinator focusing on cultural orientation, job training, and ESL programs.

In San Diego, Janice worked closely with Iraqi and Burmese refugee communities. She also studied at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan and in 2006 and 2007, traveled to northern Uganda to evaluate development projects. While in Uganda, Janice was the Program Manager for the Safety In Learning project which built a school on the Uganda and the Sudan border. There, Janice witnessed firsthand the ugly side of war and the pain experienced by refugees and internally displaced persons.

(Photo: Joseph Augustyniak for MORA)



***MORA's new Program Manager Janice Stucke***

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While at MORA, Janice will focus on further strengthening the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program in Maryland and act as a liaison between federal, state, and local agencies and the Maryland resettlement centers. Having worked directly with clients herself, Janice's special passion is in invigorating and supporting those dedicated—but frequently stressed—case-workers who work daily with refugees and asylees in Maryland. “If resettlement workers are happy, then the clients will be happy!” notes Janice with enthusiasm.

### **Lutheran Social Services Hosts Annual Employment Luncheon**

On Wednesday, September 14, the Baltimore office of the Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA) held their annual Employment Luncheon at the Hilton Baltimore Hotel. This year's event honored outstanding refugee employees and employers.

Employees of the year were Gopal Bhattarai who works for the MJ Morgan Group, and Lachu Man Upreti, who works for the Maryland School for the Blind. Employers of the Year were Marriot Hotels and Resorts, and Keswick



***Kieronne Whitaker, Human Resources Generalist and Katie Brookman, Human Resources Manager for Marriott Hotels and Resorts accept the Employer of the Year award.***

*(Photo: Joseph Augustyniak for MORA)*

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***Bryan Nizer (l) and Patrick J. Cosgrove (r) of MJ Morgan Group flank Gopal Bhattarai (in white shirt), and Jacob Freeman of the LSS/NCA.***

Multicare. Featured speakers were Linda White Andrews, Senior Trial

Attorney, Office of Special Counsel for Immigration in the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice; Deneice Kennedy, Community Relations Officer in the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security; and Janice Stucke, Program Manager for the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (also profiled in this issue.) In fiscal year 2011, Lutheran Social Services Baltimore provided a total of 357 job placements.

### **Sun Article Spotlights Refugee Youth Soccer Program**

The Baltimore Sun recently spotlighted the work of Jill Pardini, a Baltimore resident who

has brought a *Soccer Without Borders* program to Baltimore (“Waverly Woman Coaches Soccer Team of Refugee Children.”) *Soccer Without Borders* strives to “use soccer as a vehicle for positive change in the lives of marginalized youth.”

Bringing together refugee youths on the soccer field, the program has been successful in encouraging players from different countries, languages and cultures to work as a team. Partners include The Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, Baltimore City Public Schools, the International Rescue Committee, the Y of Central Maryland, Baltimore City Community College, and the Baltimore Resettlement Center. Visit this site for the article: [Refugee Soccer](#).



*Jill Pardini (third from right) watches students practice.*

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## TRANSITIONS

### Staffing Announcements at the SWRC

The IRC is proud to announce Matthew Fortier as the new Employment Program Supervisor in the Silver Spring office, starting October, 2011. Mathew joined the IRC Silver Spring in 2010 as an Employment Specialist. He has led SWRC job-readiness trainings and conducted many other trainings for hundreds of IRC clients. He also

serves as the IRC Ambassador to the Chamber of Commerce in Prince George’s county.

Amanda Bisset is the new Extended Services Coordinator in Silver Spring, beginning September 2011. Amanda worked with the Superior Court Probate Division as an intern and with the U.S Committee for Refugee and Immigrants in the Reception and Placement Program from September 2010 until she accepted the Asylee Intake Specialist position with the IRC in Silver Spring in June. Prior to that, she worked for Catholic Charities Refugee Center in Washington, DC in employment services.

### News from the BRC

On August 2, 2011 the IRC’s Community Integration Program helped organize a community picnic in the Frankford neighborhood of northeast Baltimore to commemorate the National Night Out Against Crime. Designed to help neighbors socialize and have fun in a safe multicultural space, the Program drew over 40 refugees from Bhutan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Congo, Iraq, Kenya, and other countries. Refugees cooked food to share with their U.S.-born neighbors as over 100 people enjoyed cuisine from Iraq, Eritrea, and Nepal, as well as traditional American barbecue fare.

Baltimore City Community College’s Refugee Youth Project recently sponsored a community arts project for adults and children to create a community quilt. Participants drew on individual squares in answer to the questions: “What change do you want to see in your community? How can you make that change?” The completed quilt is on display in the Baltimore Orientation Center on Eastern Avenue.

### Acknowledgments

*The New Americans wishes to thank Ada Sonnenfeld, 2011*

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