



Resource Fair at Southwest CDC Aids “New Americans”

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Upwards of 50 local residents who either recently obtained U.S. citizenship or who are in the process of doing so gathered at Southwest CDC on December 7 for a New Americans and Immigrant Resource Fair. The event was sponsored by the Paschalville Partnership, a joint initiative of the Paschalville Branch of the Free Public Library and Southwest CDC.

Although nominally open to the public for resources on housing, employment, personal finance, and the like, the main thrust of the Resource Fair was providing access to organizations that deal with the barriers often faced by persons who have recently come to our shores. Among those agencies were The Philadelphia Office of Adult Education (formerly the Mayor’s Commission on Literacy), CareerLink, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Office, Agape Senior Citizens Center, Job Corps, FINANFA, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Pennsylvania (HIAS), and the Coalition of African Communities (AFRICOM).

Recent arrivals were able to connect with these organizations on such complicated issues as naturalization documents, English classes, and healthcare and employment services.

“It is very important to have a Resource Fair here in the Southwest because there is a large population of immigrants in this area,” advised Niema Nelson from the Paschalville Library who organized the resource fair. “Unfortunately, many of them do not know the all of the great range of information and assistance to help them become acclimated to living in the United States.

“The assistance provided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Office was outstanding,” added Dominique McGirt, employment specialist at Southwest CDC who directs its Employment Center at 6328 Paschall Ave. “It also helped have all the service providers together at one place.”

“That’s our goal; to bring the “new Americans” into contact with the right organizations and help to connect them obtain

the services they need,” Nelson summarized.

In addition to being linked to services, patrons were able to enjoy delicious West African cuisine from the African Small Pot Restaurant at 6505 Woodland Avenue. Those unable to attend the December 2016 Resource Fair who would like to connect with any of the organizations that participated can contact Niema at Paschalville Library, 215-685-2662 or Dominique at Southwest CDC, 215-729-4546.

The next events sponsored by the Paschalville Partnership is another free Employment Boot Camp, January 30, 2017 through February 3 which will focus on topics like resume writing, time management, interview skills, and dressing for the job. Another resource fair is being planned for the Spring of 2017. Information and photos for this article were graciously provided by Dominique McGirt. ■