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ESOL TAPAS

TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL APPETIZERS

Refugee Conference, Chicago, IL 2007

Last month Illinois hosted the National Refugee and Immigrant Conference. Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) teachers, Terry Konchan and Josie Kramer, presented a project piloted last year with 12 refugee families. The teachers went into the homes and worked with the families on developing life skills and language learning.

New Populations resettling in the United States include Burundians from Africa and Iraqis. The Burundians have lived in refugee camps for years and decades before entering the US. The predominant language is Kirundi. Resettlement agencies reported refugees having expressed concerns such as adapting to US culture/society, disciplining their children, knowing legal rights and seeing family left behind in the camps. The following strategies were suggested when working with refugees: Continue their orientation to life skills and work on a new topic each week! Refugees receive 16 hours, at best, of orientation in camps before entering the US.

Thousands of Iraqis are projected to arrive, but actual numbers are still low. Stay tuned for information and resources in dealing with these new populations. Other presentations included health literacy, immigration law and country-specific cultural orientations. See reviews on page two.



Sudanese Lost Boys of Cleveland

Web Resources

Cultural Orientation Resource Center www.cal.org/co
Refugees from Burma: Their Backgrounds and Refugee Experiences, June 2007. Available for download at www.cal.org/co
International Family Tracing Services through the American Red Cross http://www.redcross.org/services/intl/0,1082,0_447_00.html
Ohio Refugee Services <http://jfs.ohio.gov/refugee/>
UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) - www.unhcr.org
USCRI Healthy Refugee Toolkit www.refugees.org
Refugee Health Information Network <http://www.rhin.org/>
My Picture Dictionary www.readwritethink.org

NE RC LIBRARY RESOURCES

Bilingual Dictionaries:
Kirundi and Kinyarwanda

Welcome to United States
Orientation in 11 languages.

The Somalis: Their History and their Culture
The Somali Bantu: Their History and their Culture
The Iraqis: Their History and their Culture

Available upon request at
www.neablelibrary.org.

Health Issues for Refugees

Josie Kramer, CMSD



The Minnesota State Health Dept has developed a distinct program for refugees. It was encouraging to hear that the first generation of Hmong refugees, now have professionals among themselves and their children who can help meet the health care needs of their community. These professionals understand the language and culture of their people --- the ideal in good refugee and immigrant services.

There are many professionals in the field who can be called upon to help educate students and families about basic hygiene, control of communicable diseases and other healthcare needs. Our program has had several Health Fairs to gather people into one place for such education through talks, videos and screenings (glaucoma, hearing, blood pressure and cholesterol) Feeding them nutritious snacks helps too!

Currently health literacy is the focus of many available grants and the subject of many new websites. The presenters of the session at the conference are a good starting point with multiple links to sites in Ohio and the nation. Go to: www.health.state.mn.us/refugee

Immigration Law

Terry Konchan, ESOL Teacher, CMSD

The Director of Legal Services for the National Immigrant Center in Chicago, Momy Ruiz- Velasco as well as the Assistant Director of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Susan Wexler, sounded a cautionary note to immigrants in the U.S. Noting that U.S. citizenship does confer protection from deportation, regardless of criminal activity, the speakers cautioned against certain activities, some of which seemed quite harmless. The following cautions apply only to Lawful Permanent Residents (green card holders) and other immigrants who do not yet enjoy the protection of U.S. citizenship.

Filling out a voter registration card at the local library can get a person deported. Information on court records, which supports a domestic violence charge, for instance, may lead to deportation. Signing an application for financial aid as a U.S. citizen may lead to deportation. Ruiz-Velasco advised that only licensed attorneys and organizations recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals may give legal advice. Filing an immigration application when a person is not eligible for benefits may result in deportation.

Ruiz-Velasco warned that many non-citizens who are apprehended in violation of immigration law, are caught while traveling or when applying for citizenship. She advised against signing a blank form and recommended always getting a copy of any document the immigrant signed. Having a court record expunged offers absolutely no protection for immigration purposes and only delays the eventual admission of information into that individual's records.

Overstaying a trip outside the U.S. without express permission can prevent re-admission into the states. Both women strongly recommend 100% truthfulness on any forms, as well as consulting with an immigration attorney when in doubt about a particular action.