

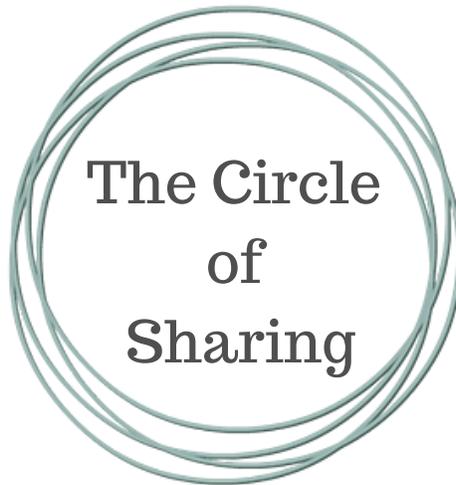
PATH TO CITIZENSHIP

2018 Annual Report

WHO WE ARE

PATH TO CITIZENSHIP is a northeast Iowa non-profit whose mission is to aid people who need help navigating the complicated path to legal status. Founded by a coalition of Decorah area faith groups and working in partnership with Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON), a national United Methodist group, Path to Citizenship provides free legal advice on the immigration process. With the help of JFON attorneys, we hold quarterly legal aid clinics, with appointments available for ten clients at each clinic. In 2016, our work was expanded to include collaboration with the Archdiocese of Dubuque Catholic Charities Immigration and Legal Services, offering legal clinics in quarters opposite JFON clinics.

These offer individual client appointments, especially for unaccompanied minors in northeast Iowa. We also have a microloan fund for costs associated with the citizenship process.



The Circle of Sharing

Louis came to one of the JFON clinics sponsored by Path to Citizenship at the recommendation of the pastor at his church. He came looking for answers, wondering about his options; his legal permanent residency status was in jeopardy since his partner had left him.

When he saw how a JFON clinic worked, he volunteered to help as an interpreter, sharing his skills in seven languages. From his native African country, he brought fluency in French, Portuguese, Creole, and Wolof, and he saw an opportunity to practice his Spanish, and possibly his basic German or basic Japanese.

Louis explains that he found help not so much in the legal answers he was seeking but even more in helping others. His generosity in turn inspired a fellow volunteer at the Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice center to give him a car. That gift enabled him to travel to look for employment, to get to his job, and to help other immigrants get to their appointments.

Louis is now among those who have to wait over three months for the renewal of a work permit, which has meant that he has lost his job. Yet in spite of adversity he remains optimistic and resourceful. Using his entrepreneurial spirit, he is exploring how to start a language consultant business via a web site. Always wanting to be a philanthropist, he gives of his skills in languages services in interpretation and translation.

He is thankful for the immigrant friends he met through JFON, especially the friend from another continent who shared that he trusted Louis even more than people from his native country. Louis shared his perspective that "God has put me here for some reason, and for me, that is to share. I'm supposed to help. In the challenges in my life, that gives me a warm feeling and that is what JFON has given me. It warms my heart."



Legal Aid Clinics

In 2014, we established a framework to provide quarterly legal aid clinics. We quickly learned that the complexities of immigration law require a trained immigration attorney, and were fortunate to learn of JFON (see “who we are”). Through a partnership with Iowa JFON and Catholic Charities, we now offer clinics at no charge to eligible clients. JFON provides immigration lawyers and other expert staff, while we provide the physical space, funding, and an amazing volunteer staff.

27 families
from 6
countries
145+
volunteer hours

In 2017, we held four clinics. Over the year, our immigration attorneys met with 27 client families from six different countries. We also conducted information sessions and volunteer trainings. At the clinics, 49 trained volunteers gave 145.91 hours, helping with hospitality, child care, interpretation, intake interviews, and initial guidance through paperwork before the clients meet with the attorneys.

Future quarterly clinics will be held at Decorah First United Methodist Church on

May 11

November 9

August 10

February 9, 2019

Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services will hold quarterly clinics July 27, October 26, January 25, and April 26 in Postville.

Did you know...

Since our first JFON Clinic on September 5th, 2014, 235 volunteers have provided 796.41 hours of service to 130 client families from 20 different countries?

I am sure you can guess what some of those countries are: yes, they include Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Somalia.

Did you know we also served immigrants from Morocco, Ecuador, Germany, Thailand, Armenia, Laos, Bangladesh, South Korea, Croatia, and yes, from Canada?

Indeed we did! And with your help and support we will continue to serve our immigrant brothers and sisters in the years to come, as long as there are needs to be met.

Microloan Fund

Our microloan fund helps with immigration fees and other expenses associated with the legal process, such as travel to court hearings, fees for mandatory physical examinations, and costs of other documentation.

Modeled on the highly successful Guatemalan Resettlement Microloan Program, which helped young people in the aftermath of the Postville immigration raid and which had a 100% repayment rate, this fund offers small loans for basic costs such as filing fees, travel expenses, and (in some cases) legal fees.

The loans, at no interest for one year, are normally in the \$500 - \$1000 range. Funded with an initial grant from the Catholic Charities Campaign for Human Development, the program has offered 11 loans this year. It is managed in cooperation with the Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center in Decorah (563-382-5337).

11 loans
offered
in **2017**

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Kai Hedstrom (liaison),
Northeast Iowa Peace and
Justice Center, Inc

WHY WE CAME TOGETHER

Our community is made up of immigrants and the children of immigrants. In the first hundred years of immigration to our community, primarily by Europeans, very few rules governed who could come to the United States from other parts of the world to make a new life. Since WWI, the government began to restrict immigration, and now opportunities are strictly limited, yet many still come even without legal status, seeking safety and security for their families, political freedom, and economic opportunity.

Current laws allow some new immigrants to start on a path to legal residency. For some, the path leads to legal permanent residence, while for others, it allows a period of respite from violence and war in their home countries and the chance to pursue education or work, free from the fear of deportation.

The good news:

With just a little support, some immigrants can follow the path, gaining security for their families and hope for their children. Our legal aid clinics and microloan fund can make the difference, giving people just the boost they need.

Fundraising Report

Path to Citizenship is now registered as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. *We are happy to announce that we met fundraising goals for our first three years.* The past year continued to see increasing numbers of unaccompanied minor children from Central America. Given the 50-100 hours of legal help needed for each child, **the annual amount of funding needed for the coming year is \$16,000.** We are reaching out to congregations throughout the area and exploring grant possibilities from both foundations and local businesses that benefit from immigrant labor. We would also like to expand the microloan fund.

Appeal

The financial need is pressing. Iowa JFON has identified over 100 UAC's (unaccompanied minor children) in Iowa. The Decorah JFON and Catholic Charities legal clinics have worked with 20 of them. Path to Citizenship has also gone beyond the JFON services to find legal guardians for ten UAC minors, to provide transportation to the required court interviews and appearances in Omaha and Des Moines, and to provide Catholic Charities counselor services for the UAC families. While several foundation grant requests are in process, we also depend heavily on support from churches and individuals.

THANK YOU!

We'd like to recognize the volunteer coordinators whose energy and skill made our clinics possible:

Clinic Coordinators:
Kathi Mitchell, Ruth Palmer

Interpretation
Coordinator: Nancy Gates-Madsen

Thanks also to the over 50 volunteers who helped out at our clinics!

To donate, send checks to:

Path to Citizenship
PO Box 355
Decorah, IA 52101

For questions,
call Ruth Palmer
at (563) 379-6777

To make client appointments:

-Call JFON 515 255-9809 for appointments at the quarterly JFON clinics

-Call Catholic Charities legal services, at 319-364-7121, for local appointments or text Kathi in English or Spanish at 563 419-6795.