Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity

Annual Report FY’ 2011
July 1, 2010—June 30,
Since 2001, the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity is Montgomery County Government’s welcome center where the County’s diverse population can be connected to public and private services, volunteering, civic engagement, cross cultural activities, and economic empowerment.

**Vision:**
The vision of the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity is to help make Montgomery County a thriving multicultural community where every resident feels welcomed, participates civically, and contributes positively to the economy.

**Mission:**
The mission of the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity is to be Montgomery County Government’s welcome center where the County’s diverse population can be connected to public and private services, volunteering, civic engagement, cross cultural activities, and economic empowerment.

Charles W. Gilchrist was a native Washingtonian, living in the District and Montgomery County throughout his childhood. He attended Williams College and Harvard Law School. In 1975 he was elected, and served through 1978, as a Maryland State Senator.

In 1978, Mr. Gilchrist served two consecutive terms as Montgomery County Executive. During that time, Mr. Gilchrist appointed the County’s first African-American and Hispanic staff advisors, created the County’s Minority Business Procurement Program and established the Commission on Ethnic Affairs.

Mr. Gilchrist sought to open doors of participation in community life to everyone. He envisioned the changing demographics of the County and encouraged everyone to welcome the new faces and cultures that were beginning to redefine our community.
Our Goals:

- Provide the most needed services to immigrants in the County through partnerships with other organizations or by utilizing skilled volunteers (information and referral to services, English as a second language, workforce development, civic engagement, computer literacy, citizenship, and pro-bono legal assistance).
- Provide Civic engagement academies to help residents get oriented to life in the County, understand their rights and responsibilities, and engage immigrant leadership.
- Assist Regional Service Centers to staff (via AmeriCorps) and create programs for Gilchrist Welcome Centers (set up classes, find partners and volunteers, materials, etc).
- Be a resource for agencies in terms of finding partners to offer programs, referring volunteers, etc.
- Increase coordination and build the network of immigrant service providers.
- Promote Diversity/Cross Cultural Understanding and Awareness via activities where people see each other as individuals and not as members of broad social categories. These activities include working together on community issues/problems, language classes, volunteering, and multicultural events.

Our programs and services:
- Information & Referral Services
- Citizenship preparation and application assistance
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Volunteering opportunities
- Spanish Language Classes
- English, Spanish & French Conversation Clubs
- Computers for Beginners
- Spanish literacy
- English grammar
- Pro bono legal clinic
- Civics for English learners
- Community building

Photo: Welcome mural (top) and Basic Computer class (Winter 2011)
“It has been very useful as we tailored the classes to help us communicate Manna information & details more comfortably with our clients who are Spanish speakers.” —Kim Damion, Executive Director, Manna Food Center.
Computer Classes:

The Gilchrist Center continues to provide basic computer literacy instruction introducing students to Windows, Microsoft software, Internet and social media, serving a total of 251 students that registered for classes.

Civic Engagement through English Conversation:

A pilot civic engagement program was run to foster communication between new county residents and representatives from Montgomery County Government through English conversation. The program invited guests speakers from different County organizations. For the closing ceremony the County Executive Ike Leggett joined the 12 participants and their instructors and encouraged them to continue committed to the Community.
Citizenship Classes and Application Assistance:

We provide Citizenship preparation classes through partnerships with Baltimore City Community College, Montgomery College and volunteer run classes. Clients eligible for becoming American citizens received individual assistance to complete their applications for citizenship through a partnership with the New Americans Citizenship Project of Maryland. 2,321 contacts were made in the drop-in sessions. Montgomery College offered 2 registration-based programs at Wheaton Library and Silver Spring’s Civic Building.

Legal Counseling:

The Center provided 1,170 pro bono legal consultations at the Wheaton Library and Upcounty sites through its partnership with the Bar Association of Montgomery County.
English (ESOL), English Grammar and English Conversation classes:

Drop-in classes are offered in all our sites for students who have changing work schedules or who want to practice their English skills. These classes received a total of \textbf{7,520} visits.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Beginner_ESOL_class_Wheaton_Library_Winter_2011.jpg}
\caption{Beginner ESOL class at Wheaton Library (Winter 2011)}
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“My English improved. I learned new words and Idioms and enjoyed talking with other students” - Bertine M. (France)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):

\textbf{602} students enrolled for registration-based ESOL classes offered by the Gilchrist Center, through its volunteer base, and partnerships with Montgomery College (WD&CE) for its Wheaton locations, and the Literacy Council of Montgomery County and the Spanish Catholic Center for its Upcounty site.

Life skills, educational and cultural programs:

Our offerings also include Spanish literacy, Spanish and French Conversation Clubs and other cultural programs such as “Go”, an Asian strategy game.
By Country of Origin:

Center participants come from a wide range of countries. The top 15 countries of origin of participants sampled are: El Salvador (662), Peru (352), USA (241), Ethiopia (192), China (132), Colombia (121), Honduras (120), Mexico (112), Guatemala (108), Bolivia (104), Ecuador (80), Cameroon (80), South Korea (75), Dominican Republic (57) and Haiti (55).

Sample: 3,331 entries

By Zip Codes:

The majority of the participants sampled were from the Mid-County area, followed by Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Upcounty in third place.

Sample: 5,075 entries
The Center relies on volunteers to run its day-to-day operations and teach its programs. During FY’11 118 volunteers supported the Center in many different capacities, contributing 4,130 hours. Among the activities that our volunteers performed:

- teaching: 2,551 hours
- reception and information and referral: 590 hours
- teaching aide: 290 hours
- administrative aide: 278 hours
- data entry: 157 hours
- class preparation: 91 hours
- general clerical: 62 hours
- database management: 54 hours
- other: 57 hours.
During FY’11 the Gilchrist Center’s staff members were:

Latino Liaison:
Karla Silvestre

Program Specialist:
Kaori Hirakawa
Dolores Ustrell Roig

Program Coordinator (Americorp fellow):
Hindeke Ammanuel
Patricia Larson
Susan Ucanay

Information & Referral Specialist:
Natalie Chhuan
Martha Guzman
Lidia Hernandez
Chicon Le
Digna Nolasco
Gabriela Raudales
Brauna Salinas
Veronica Tejada

Photo: Staff and volunteers at the Mid-County RSC site
Locations and Contact Information:

Main number: (240)777-4940
Fax number: (240)777-4941

Headquarters: Mid-County Regional Services Center
2424 Reedie Drive, Suite 220
Wheaton, MD 20902
tel: 240.777.4940
Hours of operation:
Monday through Thursday: 9 am to 4 pm

Upcounty Site:
12900 Middlebrook Road
Germantown, MD 20874
tel: 240.777.6950
Hours of operation:
Monday through Friday:
4:30 to 8 pm

Wheaton Library Site:
11701 Georgia Avenue
Wheaton, MD 20902
tel: 240.777.4950
Hours of operation:
Tuesday through Thursday:
4:30 to 8 pm
Saturday: 10 am to 4 pm

Silver Spring Site:
1 Veteran's Place
Silver Spring, MD 20910
tel: 240.777.5303
Charles W. Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity

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