

St. James Immigrant Assistance

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

We advance justice for refugees and immigrants through education, advocacy, and by helping refugees and immigrants to learn English, become citizens and connect to community resources.

Total number of immigrants helped in all our programs last year **397**

The immigrants we serve have:

- Better understood American culture**
- Done more things on their own in English**
- Talked with supervisors and co-workers**
- Got a job or promotion**
- Talked with friends and neighbors in English**
- Became a U.S. citizen**
- Attended a PTA meeting**
- Read the newspaper**
- Understood utility and other bills**
- Used the internet, library and other community resources**

Number of new citizens **45**

Number who improved their English **65**

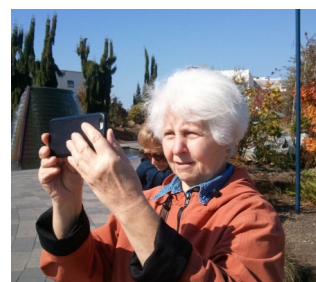
Number granted DACA **70**

Number of volunteers **73**

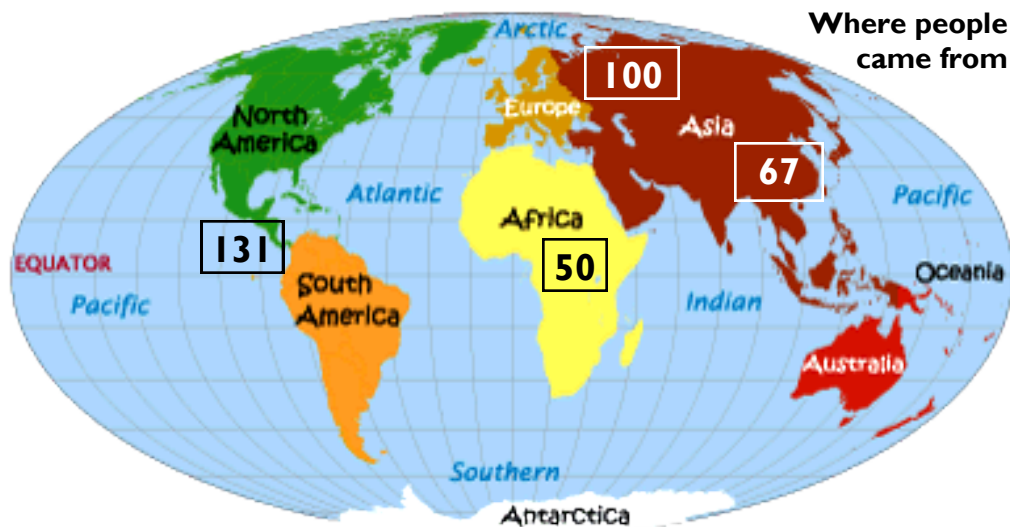
Volunteer Hours

2255 Instruction
915 Preparation
827 Travel
442 Admin
83 Other

In her early days in Seattle, Larisa “was feeling very alone among strangers” and searched for a Russian-language church to go to. She decided to attend Nikolai Cathedral on Capital Hill that conducts services in Russian. Finding a friendly community there, Larisa began searching for English classes, discovering Tania Rzhondkovska, a client liaison at St. James Immigrant Assistance. She took ESL and citizenship classes at St. James, receiving her U.S. citizenship in 2010. She is now a member of an elder integration group, which addresses the needs of elders through speakers and local trips. As a bilingual speaker she can now take advantage of even more than ever before.



Larisa on an elder group trip



Languages spoken:

Amharic, Balochi, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Chinese, Farsi, French, Georgian, Ilocano, Japanese, Kikuyu, Lao, Latvian, Luo, Mandarin, Mongolian, Oromo, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Tigrinia, Ukrainian, Uzbeki, Vietnamese

ESL TUTORING

Immigrants enrolled in our ESL often have multiple and persistent barriers such as multiple jobs, health issues, lack of transportation or childcare, etc. Those who have never been in a school, don't do well in classroom settings. Classes seldom address the immediate needs of immigrants to deal with schools, doctors, landlords, employers, etc. Tutoring offers individualized instruction tailored to people's immediate and specific needs. It includes right, responsibilities, and cross-cultural information. When volunteers give freely of their time and energy, it shows a level of welcoming and support that means more to immigrants than anything else we do.

Numbers served: About 65 annually.

ELDER INTEGRATION

Starting over in a new country is especially difficult for older immigrants. In addition to leaving their home and loved ones, they often have to deal with cognitive declines, health problems, isolation, and loss of independence. The stress of settling into a new culture can lead older adults to develop anxiety, depression, or other mental-health issues. All of this is compounded by losing established roots, relationships, and a way of life where old age was equated with wisdom and privilege. Through presentations and field trips, our Elder groups learn about a wide variety of issues such as public transportation, healthy eating, urgent care vs. emergency rooms, taxes, elections, etc.. ESL is incorporated into all of it.

Numbers served: about 100 annually.

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

After graduating from high school, undocumented youth are consigned to dead-end jobs, lose touch with their friends, experience family stress, fear being deported, and are reluctant to access help. While some should not apply for DACA, others are eligible for better forms of immigration relief. At \$465, the application fee is too much for some. The process is daunting. As with our naturalization services, we shepherd applicants throughout the process including screening, collecting the appropriate documentation, filling out and filing the application, and following up on requests for further evidence.

Numbers served: We file about 90 applications per year, and work on 10 cases each month.

CITIZENSHIP TUTORING & CLASSES

Many people are fearful, anxious, and confused about applying for citizenship. To pass the interview, they have to answer questions about their application, learn the answers to nearly 100 civics questions, and read, speak and write English at an intermediate level. The pressure of the interview can cause people to forget the English they know, the answers to questions on the application, or the civics they've learned. Our citizenship classes are usually no more than 10 participants, use a standard curriculum, include everything needed to pass the interview, and offer a sense of comradery and support. Tutoring is available for people who cannot attend or thrive in a class.

Numbers served: About 85 annually.

NATURALIZATION ASSISTANCE

Applying for U.S citizenship is often confusing and stressful. The application is 21 pages long, with 13 pages of instructions. There are options for fee waivers, age waivers, and disability-based waivers. Applicants have to explain any extended time spent outside the country, why they were members of the communist party, or if they have been involved in prostitution. The rules, exemptions, and opportunities are neither straight-forward nor easily understood. It's a detailed and daunting task.

We shepherd applicants throughout the process including screening, collecting the documentation, filling out and filing the application, following up on requests for further evidence, providing mock interviews for practice, and attending their citizenship interview. After becoming a citizen, we help them to understand their rights, responsibilities, and benefits.

Numbers served: We file about 70 applications per year, with 12 cases being worked on each month.

ADVOCACY AND RAISING AWARENESS

Throughout the year we offer events and gatherings, staff tables at fairs, provide presentations, maintain an email alert list, and regularly update our Facebook page with information about advocating for justice for immigrants.

Visit our website and/or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/St.JamesImmigrantAssistance/>