

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers, and Newcomers

December 2003

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



INTERCEDE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Intercede Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place at the Ramada Hotel on October 4, 2003. Intercede members, staff, Board members and guests were all in attendance. Board Member, Martha Ocampo, facilitated the meeting.

The meeting began with the approval of the previous years' AGM minutes, followed by the Coordinator's Report highlighting the special events that took place during the year. Board Member, Bong Castro presented the Coordinator's Report on behalf of Coordinator Fely Villasin, who was on a leave of absence. This was followed by a presentation of the Financial Report by Martha Ocampo, Board Treasurer.

Cecille Ban-ang presented the nominees for the Board of Directors. Bong Castro and Manuel Mores were re-elected to the Board. Sharon Creedland and Juliet Bermudez were elected as new members. Both expressed their gratitude and said it was an honour to join the Intercede Board.

Sharon Creedland is originally from Grenada and is a member of the 'Caribbean Connection'. She joined the Board to represent and advocate for Black domestic workers and caregivers. Juliet Bermudez said that Intercede's commitment and dedication in supporting caregivers and domestic workers inspired her to join the Board of Directors.

Returning Board members are Maria Belgrade, Martha Ocampo, and Beth Salvilla.

Former Intercede Board Member Yola Grant was the guest speaker at the AGM. She currently practices as a lawyer focusing on Employment, Human Rights and Constitutional law. Yola Grant assisted Intercede in drafting constitutions and by-laws for obtaining charitable status. The members in attendance approved and voted to ratify these by-laws.

Following the AGM, Intercede hosted a dinner and dance at the Ramada Hotel. Intercede members, friends, and supporters attended the celebration. The evening included a delicious

buffet, a fun and energetic DJ, numerous door prizes, and the highlight of the evening was a lottery draw.

Intercede would like to thank everyone who participated at the AGM and supported our fundraising efforts. Intercede's services could not exist without your involvement.

Congratulations to the following INTERCEDE Lottery Winners:

Cash Prizes

1 st Prize, \$1,500:	Ligaya Ramos	Ticket # 0561
2 nd Prize, \$1,000:	Richard Zaltz	Ticket # 0950
3 rd Prize, \$500.00:	Soly Carpio	Ticket # 2537

Consolation Prizes "Door to Door Certificate" donated by Gemini Exchange International Inc.:

Helena Duenas	Ticket # 1172
Dennis Paquin	Ticket # 0174
Willie Camaya	Ticket # 0400

Thanks to our Donor - Gemini Exchange Int'l. Inc. and Ligaya Ramos for donating some of her winnings.



First Meeting In the Year 2004

Sunday, January 11, 2004, 3 - 5 p.m.

At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

Topic: Women's Self-Defense

See You All!

*All Domestic/Caregiver Workers,
Newcomers and those on Temporary Work
Permit are welcome to attend*

**INTERCEDE MEETING
Every First Sunday of the Month**

(if holiday, meeting is on the second Sunday)

Apply or renew your membership - \$10.

INTERCEDE invites everyone to our
Christmas Meeting and Party
Guest of Honour: Ms. Susan Nielsen
Executive Director, Toronto Adult Student Association

Sunday, December 7, 2003, 3-7 p.m.
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

Pot Luck and Gift Exchange (\$10++)

HATS OFF TO OUR VALUED VOLUNTEERS

Most of our volunteers are new immigrants and caregivers who know that volunteer work is one of the strategies to gain Canadian work experience.

On a typical day in our office, you will find volunteers organizing resources and materials for our weekly Job Search Workshops or helping us prepare our brochure and office forms.

Volunteers with computer knowledge can be found teaching basic keyboarding skills and how to use the Internet to send resumes and cover letters to prospective employers.

While other volunteers assist us from home by making telephone calls to participants who want to keep informed of Intercede events and workshops.

Other volunteers travel to community centres, stores, and remittance centres to distribute Intercede brochures and flyers to help us with community outreach. We couldn't count INTERCEDE clients who volunteered to help us dispose lottery tickets during fundraising events; prepared food for our annual picnics and potluck parties; helped us spread the word about our monthly meetings, bus tour events like Niagara trips, which serves as a venue to get to know more about our clients, enjoy their company as we show them around their new home country.

Our Board of Directors is entirely made up of dedicated volunteers who contribute their time and ideas to support our organization.

Right now, there are Intercede events, workshops, computer and outreach activities that need volunteer support.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a volunteer and gaining valuable experience, please call us at (416) 483-4554 and speak with Genie at extension 21 or Des at extension 30.

We extend our deepest appreciation to our current volunteers and look forward to welcoming new volunteers to Intercede.



WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU!

During our monthly meeting at Cecil Community Centre on November 2, 2003, our guest speaker was Ann Phillips from South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

She discussed the effects of hazardous household products to our health, particularly to homeworkers, domestic workers and live in caregivers, who use these products almost everyday in cleaning their employer's house. She discussed and explained the meaning of warning signs on labels of household products which we often took for granted and gave some pointers before buying them.

She distributed handouts on safer alternatives to hazardous household products, such as cleaning products, spot removers, pest control and germ disinfectants. She explained how to use them and the advantages of using those alternatives.

The following are examples of safer alternatives to hazardous cleaning products:

<u>Potentially Hazardous Product</u>	<u>Safer Alternative</u>
Aphid Killer	Spray thoroughly with water. Repeat three times weekly.

Deodorizers/Air Fresheners	Simmer cinnamon and cloves
Drain openers	Baking soda and vinegar, followed by boiling water or use plumber's snake
Floor cleaner	Vinegar and water
Glass and window cleaner	Vinegar and water
Oven cleaners	Use baking soda, or a non-phosphate concentrate

For more information, you can drop by at INTERCEDE's office and ask for brochures and list of safer alternatives to hazardous household products.



Coco's corner: *All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.*

Marie's Story

Marie will tell you that she is thankful that she "got a second chance to live."

Marie is a Filipino live-in caregiver who contracted the deadly SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus last spring. One of her duties as a live-in caregiver was to bring her elderly employer to medical appointments.

On March 13, 2003, Marie brought her employer to the emergency department of Scarborough Grace Hospital where Marie was unknowingly exposed to the SARS virus.

Soon after, Marie developed a persistent cough and breathing difficulties. She felt feverish and weak, so on March 19th she went to see her family doctor who confirmed that she had contracted the SARS virus.

Marie suddenly found herself facing a life and death situation. She slipped into a coma for nearly three months and was on a ventilator for 81 days.

Miraculously, she survived the ordeal. However due to her prolonged hospital stay, Marie developed a bilateral knee problem. North York General Hospital is currently monitoring her recovery.

Marie's counsellor at Intercede assisted her with housing and immigration papers and possible re-employment. She also received support from social workers at North York General Hospital.

Marie has agreed to participate in a 12-month study regarding the SARS epidemic.

Esther's Story

A distressed caregiver questions her fate in Canada. "Will I be sent back home for not completing the required 24 months of live-in work at the end of my 3-year stay in Canada, even if I am very sick and unable to work?"

Ester has cancer. She was terminated from her job as a live-in caregiver when she started undergoing chemotherapy. Her employment authorization under the Live-in Caregiver Program will soon expire which means her OHIP coverage will expire too.

Despite her illness, Esther decided to follow through with her plans to get married. Her husband has filed for sponsorship under Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds.

Esther has received immeasurable support and care from her loved ones and she is optimistic that she will win her battle with her cancer.



THE CARIBBEAN CONNECTION

On September 20, 2003, Intercede's Black Women's support group, *The Caribbean Connection* conducted a meeting with *United Voices*, a support group for Caribbean women at Davenport Perth Community Centre, and the Portuguese and Spanish Speaking support group from Multicultural Access Alliance.

All three groups have members without permanent status in Canada. Davenport Perth Community Centre, Intercede, and Multicultural Access Alliance are members of the Status Coalition. Our common goal is to build support for members who are living in Canada without permanent status.

The joint meeting was hosted by Davenport Perth Community Centre, who organized activities and exercises on how to build solidarity and mobilize groups with members without permanent status.

We discussed barriers such as unfair and rigid immigration laws and how to overcome these obstacles. The meeting included speakers from the Status Coalition and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty.

The groups committed to conduct more outreach to communities facing similar problems. They also want to raise public awareness of these issues. The meeting was viewed as a positive starting point in bringing together a diverse group of people who are extremely vulnerable to isolation and lack of support services.

Update: *The Caribbean Connection* had their last monthly meeting on November 8, 2003. The guest speaker was Arlette Garreton, a group facilitator at Davenport Perth Community Centre. Arlette facilitates a support group for Caribbean women called *United Voices* and a support group for Caribbean mothers with children from newborn to age 5.

Group activities include fundraisers, group outings, guest speakers, and art classes. The emphasis is on group support and sharing experiences. This has built solidarity among members.

Intercede wanted to learn how these groups got started and how they have remained active in order to help us develop the Caribbean Connection group at Intercede.

Arlette emphasized that an important part of maintaining a strong group is adequate funding and support from the group's agency.

If you are a Black Caregiver or Domestic Worker and are interested in becoming part of the **INTERCEDE Caribbean Connection** please come to our next meeting on:

Saturday January 10, 2003

2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Location: INTERCEDE Office

***Also Black Caregivers and Domestic Workers** are encouraged to come out to INTERCEDE's Annual Christmas Party on Sunday December 7, 2003 at the Cecil Community Centre (College and Spadina)

If you have any questions please contact Salma Saadi at (416) 483-4554 x 22.



Q and A with Coco and Anita

Q *My friend and I have passed the Ontario Nurses Examination and will soon complete our first year live-in work as caregivers under the Live-Caregiver Program. Can we then apply for a permit to work in the Hospitals or Nursing homes?*

A. Unfortunately, because you arrived in Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program, you are only authorized to work with the employer stated on your work permit. You cannot accept employment outside of the Live-in Caregiver Program until you are issued an Open Employment Authorization or Permanent Resident status.

You can renew your Employment Authorization in order to complete the two years required live-in work, and then you can file an application for Permanent Residence.

Once your application is approved in principle, you can request an Open Employment Authorization. This will allow you to work with any employer of your choice while your landed status is being processed.

Q *I have a son, who is legally adopted by my brother when he was two years old, but he never lived with my brother and his family. My son knows that I am his mother and I support him financially while he is being taken care of by his grandmother (my mother). I am married and have two other children that I included in my application for Permanent Residence under the Live-Caregiver Program as dependents. Can I request that my son who was adopted by my brother be included in my application?*

A No, although you are the biological parent, your son is already legally adopted. You cannot include him as one of your dependents in your application.

Q *Does the Canadian Immigration Canada (CIC) Call Centre have a new phone number?*

A Yes, the new phone number of the CIC Call Centre is now **1-888-242-2100**. You can call them for information regarding the status of your application.

Q *What is the new location and address of the Canadian Embassy in the Philippines?*

A The Canadian Embassy – Visa Section is now located at:
RCBC Plaza Tower 2, 6th Floor
6819 Ayala Avenue
Salcedo Village, Makati City

The new mailing address is:

The Canadian Embassy
Visa Section
P.O. Box 2168, Makati Central PO
Makati City 1200
Philippines

Q *When is the best time to renew SIN cards starting with 900 series? Where do I go?*

A If you have a work permit you were probably issued a SIN (Social Insurance Number) card that start with the numbers "900".

You can renew these cards at the Human Resource and Development Canada (HRDC) office nearest you.

If your work permit is to expire between November and March 30, 2004, you must first renew your work permit before renewing your SIN card. This will insure that your SIN card has the same expiry date as your work permit.

Every time you change employers you will be issued a new work permit with a new expiry date. Please remember to renew your SIN card every time you are issued a new work permit. This will insure that your SIN card has the same expiry date as your work permit.

If you have any questions, call Intercede at (416)483-4554 and speak with any counsellor for more information or book an office appointment.



Merry Christmas and
A Happy Prosperous New Year to All!

INTERCEDE

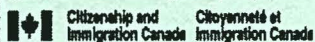
Address: 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405
Toronto Ontario
M4P 1K5

Regular Hours: Mon-Fri. 9 am - 4 p.m.
Telephone: (416) 483-4554
Fax: (416) 483-9781
Toll-Free: 1-877-483-4554
E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

INTERCEDE STAFF:

- Fely Villasin - Coordinator
- Des Balce - JSW Facilitator
- Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor
- Salma Saadi - Settlement Counsellor
- Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor
- Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP Program and Job Search Program with COSTI-OCASI; Ontario Status of Women; the City of Toronto CS GP, grant programs, for their financial support.



JSW SUCCESS STORY

Persistence with Capital "P" Pays Off

I was an engineer trained in the Philippines. I expected to spend a lot of money in order to practice in a regulated profession in Canada. I anticipated difficult months of seeking employment that matched my background and interests. As far as I can recall, more than a few reams of resume paper and A4s were farmed out to various companies I intended to work for, before I got this job.

Intercede guided my family and I through a free 4-day orientation workshop. We learned how to access the Canadian job search market and what resources were available in the community. The tools and information we learned from the workshop really helped us when we applied for jobs.

I now work as a Materials Manager with a semiconductor company. My son, Jam now works at a restaurant and my husband, Rico has secured part-time employment.

I am glad that I did not stop looking until I found a job that I felt good about. Persist even if there are more rejections after interviews in a row after another. My message to fellow newcomers is to be very persistent even when your job search feels challenging. Persistence will pay off in the end.

Teresita M. Canlas



FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP

FOR NEWCOMERS AND CAREGIVERS

When: January 17, 18, 25 & 31, 2004
February 1, 15, 22 & 29, 2004
March 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2004

Time : 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Where: INTERCEDE
234 Eglinton Ave. E., Ste. 405
Toronto, ON., M4P 1K5

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 21 or 30 to sign up or e-mail jsw@intercedetoronto.org
Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada & sponsored by COSTI & OCASI

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