

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

December 2005

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



OWWA BENEFITS AND SERVICES FOR OVERSEAS FOREIGN WORKERS

By Anita Fortuno

During our monthly meeting on November 6 at Cecil Community Centre, our speaker was Jong Olalia, Philippine Labor Attaché to Canada.

He discussed the common problems encountered by live-in caregivers and the actions being taken by his office to confront the abuses committed against live-in caregivers coming from the Philippines. He said that he will discuss the problems in the LCP with the incoming Philippines ambassador to Canada and work on possible changes in this program in consultation with INTERCEDE.

He spoke too about the benefits and services under the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, (OWWA) and admitted that it is the employer's responsibility to pay the OWWA membership fee of US\$25.00. This fee is required of all workers leaving the Philippines to work abroad. However, since live-in caregivers are processed individually, they pay for their membership fees unlike other overseas foreign workers who are hired and processed in groups by employment agencies representing employers from Middle East and other countries. However, according to Olalia, if live-in caregiver applicants are in contact with their prospective employer or agency, they could ask the employer to pay for this membership fee or reimburse the amount from their employers upon arrival in Canada.

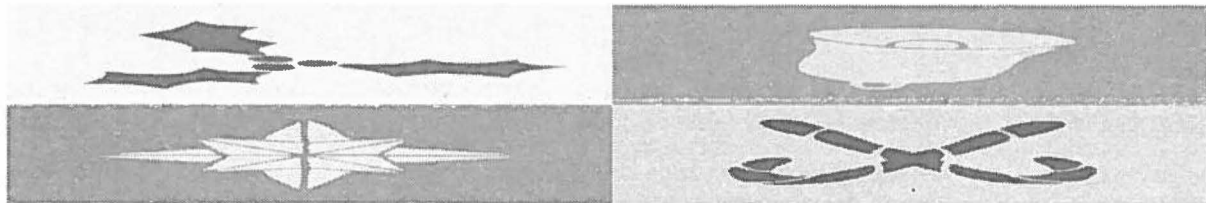
According to OWWA information following are some of its benefits and services:

Insurance and Health-Care Benefits

Should a member or her family get sick and go home to the Philippines, there is medical assistance through Phil-Health, formerly Medicare. However, live-in caregivers who are not yet covered by OHIP can not avail of medical

Cont. next page

Seasons Greetings



**INTERCEDE invites everyone to our
Holiday Pot Luck Party**

Program: 60/40 Raffle Draw

Sunday, December 4, 2005, 3-7 p.m.
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

Join the Gift Exchange (\$10++)

assistance through OWWA in Canada. Why?

A member is covered with life insurance for the duration of an employment contract. The coverage includes:

- P100,000.00 for natural death and P200,000.00 for accidental death.
- P 2,000 to 50,000 for disability and dismemberment
- P100,000.00 for permanent disability and
- P 20,000.00 for burial benefit in case of a member's death

Loan Guaranteed Fund

1. Pre-Departure Loan - This loan services ready-to-leave newly hired OFWs whose OWWA membership fees have been paid by their employers or agents. This loan is designed to assist members in their pre-departure needs such as payment of placement fees, clothing requirements, pocket money and other pre-departure expenses.
2. Family Assistance Loan - This is available for emergency and other family needs as endorsed by the member. These loans can not exceed P40,000.

Education and Training Benefits

A member or his duly designated beneficiary may avail of any of the following scholarship programs subject to a selection process and accreditation of participating institutions.

1. Skills-for-Employment Scholarship Program for technical, vocational training scholarship
2. Education for Development Scholarship Program for baccalaureate courses. A maximum of P10,000. for school fees and P20,000 for allowances per semester shall be provided.
3. Seafarers' Upgrading Program for sea-based members. They shall be entitled to one upgrading program for every three membership contributions. Qualified members shall be provided with training assistance from P1,200 to a maximum of P7,500.00

Social Services and Family Welfare Assistance

1. Repatriation Program whenever necessary
2. Reintegration Program from the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment which includes community organizing, capability building, social preparation programs and livelihood loans.

Workers Assistance and On-Site Services

Members may avail of on-site assistance such as locating the OFW, providing information and guidance, developing materials of the Pre-Departure Orientation, seminars, conducting psycho-social counseling, conciliation services, medical and legal assistance, and outreach missions among others.

For detailed information about benefits and services under OWWA, call INTERCEDE or the Philippines Labor Attaché at (416) 975-8252

INTERCEDE

is inviting former participants and members to join **Leadership and Advocacy Workshops** which will start in April 2006.

To register or for more information call Genie at 416-483-4554 ext. 21 .

“FROM VICTIMIZATION TO EMPOWERMENT”

INTERCEDE Conference

Friday - March 30, 2006
Saturday & Sunday - April 1 & 2, 2006

Community Night -April 1 - 7 p.m. (\$20 ticket)

**Live-in Caregivers in Ontario
outside Toronto are welcome.**

Register by calling Genie at 416-483-4554 ext. 21.

RP OVERSEAS ABSENTEE VOTER REGISTRATION STARTS

As the Philippines gears up for the elections on 2007, the Commission on Elections is hopeful that the next polls will draw greater participation from overseas Filipinos.

To help ensure that more Filipinos abroad will be able to cast their votes in 2007, the Comelec Committee on Overseas Absentee Voting has announced an extended overseas absentee voter registration period from October 3, 2005 to August 31, 2006.

Who may register as overseas absentee voters? Registration is open to citizens of the Philippines abroad who are at least 18 years of age on May 24, 2007 and are not otherwise disqualified by the law.

It is also open to those who have reacquired or retained their Philippine citizenship under Republic Act 9225 and other Filipino citizenship under Republic Act 9225 and other Filipino citizens with dual citizenship.

The overseas absentee voter registration is also open to immigrants or permanent residents of other countries who are recognized as such in their home countries.

Those who registered as on overseas absentee voter in 2003 but who were unable to vote in the 2004 national elections will not need to register, according to the primer on the Comelec site, which is available for download in PDF format at <http://www.comelec.gov.ph/oav/booklet-pri.pdf>. This is because their names are still on the certified list of overseas absentee voters. If they fail to vote in the 2007 polls, however, their names will be deleted from the certified list in their respective consulate or embassy.

If they registered as overseas absentee voters in 2003 but know that they will be in another country on May 14, 2007, they may still vote provided they file a letter-request for transfer of registration record at their embassy or consulate.

For more information on the overseas absentee voter registration and to download the OAV forms and primer, visit the Comelec website at www.comelec.gov.ph and the Department of Foreign Affairs homepage at www.dfa.gov.ph.

(An excerpt from www.inq17.net/globalnation/ser_ann/2005/oct/04-01)

Q & A

Q - I applied for permanent residence along with my family members in the Philippines. When my husband received the Certification of No Previous Marriage from Philippine National Census Statistics Office, it appeared that he got married again four years after our marriage. He admitted that he had an affair and they had a child but they separated two years after they got married. He apologized for hurting me and our children and he had given me a notarized letter stating that he is no longer interested to come to Canada and he is giving me full custody of our children. I was so hurt by his betrayal and I don't want to be with him anymore. I don't want to include him in processing of my application for permanent residence, what should I do?

A - Write a letter to Case Processing Centre (CPC) in Vegreville, Alberta and send a copy to the Canadian embassy in Manila, informing them that you are no longer requesting for concurrent processing of your husband. However, since you are not divorced from your husband, immigration will still require him to undergo the same processing as your children and if he will not comply with the requirements it would delay your approval for permanent residence. You may file for uncontested divorce here in Canada, get a certification from your lawyer that your divorce from your husband is in process and send a copy to CPC-Vegreville and to the Canadian embassy in Manila. Upon receipt of this certification, Immigration will no longer require your husband to undergo processing.

Q - Will it be a problem for me if my employer is not deducting room and board from my salary? I am a live-in caregiver and my friends told me that I should be paying for room and board otherwise I will not have any proof that I really worked as a live-in caregiver.

A - No, you will not have any problem if you are not paying for your room and board. There are employers who are not deducting this expense from your salary because this would be added taxable income for them. This means that you are staying with them for free but it does not mean that you are not living in their house and working as live-in caregiver. When you apply for permanent residence the proof of your employment are; 1. Record of employment from previous employers, if you have any, 2. Pay slips or statement of earnings showing your hourly rate, pay period, gross pay, deductions and net pay.

Q - I went to Bahamas with my employer for their two week vacation. My employer called CIC call centre and asked if I need to get a re-entry visa. She told the call centre agent that we will enter Canada through the United States so she was advised that I don't need to get re-entry visa. My employer did not make it clear that we will just have an hour stop over in Detroit on our way to Canada. I was held at the Canadian immigration port of entry for several hours because I did not have a re-entry visa. Through the intercession of my employer, I was allowed to enter Canada but I was issued a Temporary Resident Permit.

I applied for permanent residence and I received a letter from Immigration in Vegreville, Alberta, advising me that I have to re-instate my status under the Live-in Caregiver Program otherwise they could not continue with the processing of my application for permanent residence and open work permit

because I am now on a Temporary Resident Permit. What shall I do?

A - You can re-instate your status by applying for re-entry visa in Buffalo. You could do it by mail or in person if you have a US visa. Once you received your re-entry visa, go to Canadian port of entry have your re-entry visa stamped by the Canadian immigration officer then send a copy to the Case Processing Centre in Vegreville, Alberta. Once your re-entry visa was stamped by the Canadian immigration authorities at the port of entry, you have re-instated your status.

INTERCEDE

Get-Together with Lesbians and Friends

Date: December 16, 2005, Friday

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: INTERCEDE office

234 Eglinton Ave. E., Ste. 405

For information, please call Genie at 416-483-4554 ext. 21

INTERCEDE Group of Special Friends

Next meeting on Tuesday, December 20 at 6 pm
at INTERCEDE office

Call Coco at 416 483 4554 ext 23

INTERCEDE BLACK SUPPORT GROUP

By Bernice Small

On Saturday November 19, women of the Caribbean Connection, INTERCEDE Black Support Group welcomed guest speaker Marie Chen who led a discussion on issues around Immigration. Mrs. Chen is a lawyer from the African Canadian Legal Clinic and has been working in this field for the past eight years.

Mrs. Chen talked about the services her organization provides and the different ways in which they help people in Canada who are without status. She also mentioned that when applying under Humanitarian & Compassionate Grounds, it is important to have a lawyer look over the filled application forms before submitting them to immigration.

The women had a very positive response to Mrs. Chen's presentation and many acknowledged that they felt comfortable talking about their immigration status with her.

If you are a domestic worker or a caregiver from the Black community and would like to be part of the Caribbean Connection, please contact Bernice Small at (416)483-4554 ext. 22.

**INTERCEDE'S Board of Directors
For 2005-2006**

- Keisha Toby** - **President**
- Minerva Bannawi** - **Vice-President**
- Martha Ocampo** - **Treasurer**
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- Marilyn Oladimeiji** - **Director**
- Maria Belgrave** - **Director**
- Bernadette Gapuz** - **Director**

JOB SEEKER - HOW PREPARED ARE YOU?

By Vicky Policarpio

When Maria arrived in Canada to work as a live-in Caregiver, she was confident that she had with everything she needed to succeed. She had her education, experience in her profession and valid employment that awaited her in Canada. She had a grim determination to succeed, a whole future planned and she meant to keep moving on.

According to her plan, Maria was going to work as a live-in caregiver for 24 months then she would apply at the same time for an open permit and her permanent resident status. After she received her open permit she would leave her employment as a caregiver and start looking for a job in the accounting field.

She knew that she could make it. All she had to do was stay with one employer for 24 months no matter what happened. She knew that as a caregiver she could not attend any schooling nor work at any job other than the one stated on her work permit. To prevent any problems that may jeopardize her bright future, she was going to follow all the rules!

True to her plan, she finished 24 months working with one employer. Then she finally got her open permit and her permanent resident status. Maria did exactly what was left for her to do to accomplish her agenda on the road of success: she said goodbye to her employer and started looking for the job that she really loved in Accountancy.

Successful at the Board exams for accountants back home and with 15 years of work as an accountant and later auditor in a big company, she felt that she had all the right tools and qualifications to look for accounting job in Canada.

Seven months later, Maria is still looking for a job in her profession. Today Maria realizes that she needs more than just a great education and a vast experience for her to reach her targeted goal. She was confused and disappointed when she found out that an acquaintance whose education was inferior to hers got a good job in a bank.

When she asked, what helped the person land a job, she was told that all it took was right preparation, the right tools and techniques to look for a job and she learned all these from attending a Job Search Workshop at INTERCEDE.

To know more on the right tools and techniques to prepare yourself for job-hunting, register for our FREE Job Search Workshops today! Call Vicky at 416-483-4554 ext. 30

**FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP
FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS**

WHEN: SUNDAY

December 3, 11, 17 & 18, 2005

January 8, 15, 22 & 29, 2006

February 5, 12, 19 & 26, 2006

TIME : 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**WHERE: 167 Augusta Ave. Kapisanan Philippine Centre
North of Dundas, West of Spadina**

**Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up.
Seating is limited.**

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

INTERCEDE

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Bernice Small - Settlement Counsellor

Vicky Policarpio - JSW Facilitator

Salma Saadi - JSW Co-Facilitator

Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP and Job Search Program; the Municipality of Toronto CSP, and The Ontario Solicitor General's Office for their financial support.

 **Citizenship and Immigration Canada**  **Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada**



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