

# **DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS**

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

December 2006

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



## **RESPONSE TO PROPOSED CHANGES IN CANADA GUEST WORKER PROGRAM / TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM**

*By Coco Diaz*

INTERCEDE recently attended a meeting along with other NGOs and unions to present experiences in dealing with different temporary worker programs in Canada. The meeting was coordinated by the Canadian Labour Congress at their National office in Ottawa.

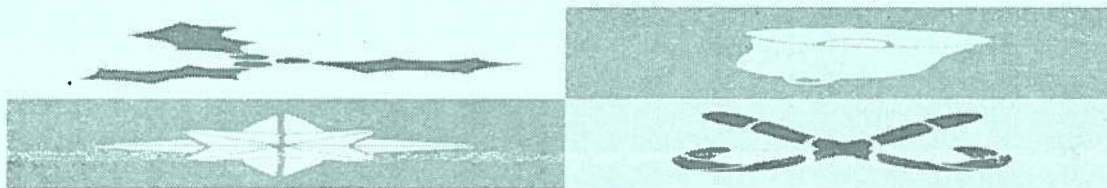
The objective of the one day conference was to:

- ✦ Share understanding of the shortcomings of Guest Worker Program that includes discussion on what are the policy tools needed to advance human rights and labours protections of migrant workers
- ✦ Improve understanding of how government departments operate and how to provide meaningful input to policy developments;
- ✦ Establish an ongoing dialogue with government department, labour affiliates and concern groups regarding temporary worker issues;
- ✦ Build alliances between labour and migrant rights working groups to better monitor and challenge policy development and implementation.

INTERCEDE made a presentation on the Live-In Caregiver Program, one of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The LCP is a unique program where a foreign worker is not fulfilling a seasonal demand but a permanent one. Making-up for the non-existence of affordable universal child care, it is a program that is highly beneficial to employers who may need low-cost caregiving for the elderly, for people with special needs, and for children.

*Cont. next page*

## **Seasons Greetings**



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

**Let's watch together the Documentary Film of Domestic Workers  
and meet Ad Hoc Committee Members**

**Program: 60/40 Raffle Draw**

Sunday, December 3, 2006, 3-7 p.m.  
At Kapisanan Philippine Centre, 167 Augusta Ave,  
(North of Dundas St. W., West of Spadina)

**Join the Gift Exchange (\$10++)**

The afternoon session was attended by senior staff of CIC and HRSDC who listened to reports regarding the different groups who are in Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker program like the seasonal agricultural workers, temporary workers in construction, skilled workers given temporary work permits and those in the LCP. The CIC and HRSDC officials made presentations on upcoming changes to the Temporary Foreign Program. It was emphasized that they would be redesigned and a Monitoring and Compliance Component will be in place so that there would be more protection for temporary foreign workers and more employer accountability.

**SPECIAL FRIENDS, STUBBORN WOMEN**

*Marinel Alcoba Lopez:*

About a year ago Coco Diaz organized our support group "Special Friends, Stubborn Women". We are all grateful for the time we spent with each one who graciously donated her moment of truth and insight.

At our October 17, 2006 meeting, my "special friends" started with drawing and interpreting the picture we created. All of us revealed and compared our illusions. The circle was the starting point for our visualization of an image of an Angel full of hope, who was contented, bubbly, joyful, and optimistic, someone who triumphantly hid some mysterious portrait of her character. Somehow we related this picture to our own life. Ours is the beginning of a journey that will redefine who we are and what we want from life, a journey that has obstacles and solutions that others will share and help us endure. The road ahead is uncertain and heavy sometimes but if we believe that God will provide what's best for us then everything will be alright. Even in the midst of a great tragedy there is so much to be thankful as the wonderful and amazing support group launched by INTERCEDE.

"I had never been a part of a support group before" said our new member, Josie, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer early this year. She didn't know what to expect from the group but was thankful for it as a whole new way of being comforted, being calmer, and having a positive attitude through her illness. Each one of us discovered that people who were once complete strangers can become the most trusted of "special" confidantes. Sheila, who underwent open heart surgery felt so blessed with the outpouring of guidance and moral support from the INTERCEDE until she was finally granted immigrant status. We share a unique and painful experience that even our closest friends and family cannot thoroughly understand sometimes. As Lyn, who has undergone dialysis for 12 years now "before long this group became an important part of my healing process".

As for me, I am on my 2nd year of remission from breast cancer and this group meeting is something I look forward to as a respite from in my daily routine. Some of our members are thankful for this precious time we spend as a team to enjoy the "zest" for life. All of us acknowledge the unexpected blessing that INTERCEDE has given to desperate people whose paths would not have crossed and would not have gained the friendships we made.

At our last meeting, Coco Diaz as the counselor-facilitator was frank enough to discuss a very important matter: the subject of Power of Attorney and Wills. We were a bit stunned at first

Our group is encouraging anyone who is pre-occupied with illness or similar life challenges to join us and find some emotional stability during such trying times.

*Jocelyn Adviento:*

My name is Jocelyn Adviento, a kidney dialysis patient for nearly 13 years now and a member of INTERCEDE's "Special friends stubborn Women's Support Group". Our special group is very grateful and applauds the untiring effort and genuine concern of Coco Diaz, counselor/program manager of INTERCEDE for launching this group for caregivers.

I am also very happy for the encouragement and support of Fely Villasin, INTERCEDE coordinator, for naming our group "Stubborn Women", because we are a group of women who are not giving up hope and are determined to live our life to the fullest despite a wide variety of illnesses.

The group gets together on scheduled times to confide and share our daily coping strategies and to support each other in many different ways with hopes of lifting ourselves up morally and emotionally. Our recent gathering was extremely useful and enlightening when we discussed some important legal issues like having a Power of Attorney and preparing a Last Will and Testament and reviewed our Life Insurance policies. We all agreed that it would be a big help and lesser burden to our family, relatives and friends if we were well prepared for any eventuality.

I am calling on anyone reading this monthly newsletter to inform anyone you know who is afflicted with any "catastrophic illness" to kindly introduce our group so that we can give our support. Again thank you, INTERCEDE, and keep up the good work.

**INTERCEDE Group of Special Friends**

Christmas Get together at INTERCEDE office  
On December 8, 2006, 1—5 p.m.

Call Coco at 416 483 4554 ext 23

**INTERCEDE BLACK SUPPORT GROUP**

The Caribbean Connection Preps for Black History Month/ Black Support Group met on November 18, 2006, at INTERCEDE office to discuss plans for INTERCEDE's celebration of Black History Month.

The celebration will be held on Sunday, February 11, 2007, at Cecil Community Centre in Spadina from 2 to 5 pm in the afternoon.

If you were not able to attend our meeting and you have a special talent and like to perform on this occasion, please feel free to contact me as soon as possible at 416-483-4554 ext. 22.

**INTERCEDE**

is inviting former participants and members to join **Leadership and Advocacy Workshops** which will start in January 2007.

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

## STORIES IN THE LCP

I arrived in Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program on March 2002. My employer was very nice and she allowed me to use their computer at home to enhance and practice my computer skills.

I used my days off logging into internet, checking and sending email messages to my friends and relatives in the United States and in the Philippines. I received an email from a stranger from Nigeria asking for my assistance to help his friend in Montreal. I ignored this email but he kept on sending the same messages for days, so I decided to reply.

After several exchanges of messages, he asked me for a favor. He said his friend in Montreal needed financial assistance and that he could not send money directly to Montreal since his friend does not have a bank account yet. He told me that he would send a check payable to me and all I had to do was to deposit it in my account.

After several days, I have to withdraw the whole amount and his friend in Montreal would contact me to get the money. He also stressed that should I need financial assistance in the future, he could lend me money, in return for the favor I would do for him and his friend.

At first, I was hesitant to help this person because he was a stranger. However, my best friend encountered an emergency and she needed money to be able to go home to the Philippines the soonest possible time. I remembered the offer of this guy in the internet so I decided to email him again and told him that I am willing to help him and his friend but at the same time would he lend the money for my friend. He said he was going to send me Can\$10,000, \$5,000 for his friend in Montreal and the rest is for my loan.

After several days, I received a cheque payable to me in the amount of Can \$30,000. I was so surprised and confused so I decided not to deposit it yet to my account. Few days had passed and I received email from this guy in Nigeria begging me to deposit the cheque because his friend in Montreal needed it badly. Since I needed money to help my friend too, I decided to deposit the cheque in my account. The bank teller told me that it had to be cleared within five days since it involved huge amount of money.

After a week, I went back to the bank but to my surprise, I was told that my account was closed pending an investigation. I immediately emailed the guy from Nigeria but his email address was no longer working. I could no longer contact him and I was totally lost in confusion.

Months had passed, and then one day, Toronto policemen came to my employer's house and took me to the Police Station. I was told that Montreal Police requested for their assistance. I was taken to Montreal for further investigation on "money laundering" and I was detained for one day. My employer got so scared and when I returned to Toronto, she terminated my employment.

I am now in a situation where I have a pending criminal case in Montreal, I am unemployed and can not complete the

twenty four months requirement for permanent residence under Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP). My friends have shunned me and I am dealing with this problem alone.

Fortunately, I found a new employer and I went to Buffalo to start all over again under the program. I was surprised when the immigration officer asked me about my case in Montreal. After the interview in Buffalo, my application was refused for the reason that I did not meet the requirements to be re-admitted into LCP.

INTERCEDE referred me to an immigration lawyer to appeal the decision of Visa officers in Buffalo. The Immigration lawyer told me that I am in a very difficult situation because of my case in Montreal. He stressed further that my appeal may also be refused too unless I am cleared of the money laundering case in Montreal. I should not have been in this situation if I had been more careful. I only meant to help my friend and other people but I ended up being the loser now.

INTERCEDE wrote this story as a warning to other live-in caregivers and everyone else.

**INTERCEDE conveys our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the family of Rose Amparado-Japay from Ozamis City, Philippines.**

## COCO'S CORNER:

Some caregivers consider their dream fulfilled once their family is re-united. They are happy that spouse and children, or parent and sibling are finally together again. But no one expects that they would be in trouble with the law because of culture shock or other problems of adjustment in a new country!

In such situation, you as a responsible sponsor, need to provide support especially if your child must go through the criminal justice system. Even adults would find it scary and confusing. Help your dependent child or family member by being present and assist by getting the information needed for a resolution. Get a competent lawyer who is specialized to handle the case.

Know, for example, that for a court appearance, if a lawyer is not available, there is a duty counsel, who a lawyer is appointed by the court, to give free legal help and other assistance. Being a parent of a child who has been charged with a crime is very stressful and confusing. You can help by learning about the court process and seeking legal advice. Call a community legal clinic or INTERCEDE for referral to appropriate agencies.

## INTERCEDE

### *Get-Together with Lesbians and Friends*

Date: January 12, 2007, Friday

Time: 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Place: INTERCEDE office  
234 Eglinton Ave. E., Ste. 405

For information, please call Coco at 416-483-4554 ext. 23

# POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

By Rosel Villamor

Some people may wonder why I work as a volunteer- spending my spare time to do unpaid work rather than spending it as quality time with friends. Volunteering may not be very popular to some and may not be taken seriously by others but it is different with me.

As a domestic Worker for over four years, I constantly find myself struggling between a practical decision to earn clean, easy money by continuing this work and my long time dream to resume my previous career. Like everybody else, I believe that Canada could make great changes in my life and I meant to work on it.

After taking Job Search Workshop at INTERCEDE, I decided right away to start employing what the workshop taught us in order to achieve our goal. I started planning my time trainings and short courses and to make myself eligible for my targets. Because Canadian work experience is a big plus when looking for a job, I decide to do volunteer work, which considered a valid Canadian experience.

While working as volunteer, I felt some changes in my self-esteem, and before I knew it my self confidence had grown. Through volunteering I gained more understanding of Canadian culture and its diverse society. I became more aware of the social issues which are related to my professional background. I used to worry about Canadian references (other than my caregiving jobs), but that too was resolved through my volunteering.

Yes to some, volunteering may not be that popular, but for me it is helping me prepare for the future. Volunteering provides me additional references. It gives me further knowledge in my career. This knowledge gives me confidence and makes me feel empowered. Volunteering is empowering!

## INTERCEDE First Meeting In the Year 2007

Sunday January 7, 2007, 3 pm

Cecil Community Centre

(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

Topic to be announced.

## FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY

December 2, 3, 9 & 10, 2006

January 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2007

February 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2007

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

WHERE: PROLEGAL

164 Eglinton Ave. E., 3rd Floor

(West of Redpath, Walking distance from Eglinton Subway station)

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

Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

## INTERCEDE

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

Regular Hours: Mon-Friday 9 am - 5 p.m.

Telephone: (416) 483-4554

Fax: (416) 483-9781

Toll-Free: 1-877-483-4554

Web Site: www.intercedetoronto.org

E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

### INTERCEDE STAFF:

Fely Villasin - Part - Time Executive Director

Jo Alcampo - Administrative Consultant

Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager

Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor

Bernice Small - Settlement Counsellor

Vicky Policarpio - JSW 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



WANT TO CONTINUE RECEIVING OUR NEWSLETTER? If you want a one-year subscription to DOMESTIC'S CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS, please complete the form below and mail it to us with appropriate payment or call (416) 483-4554 ext. 21

Please check:  Subscription: New/Renewal  Membership: New/Renewal  Change of Address  Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt./Ste. \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Province/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

INTERCEDE Members: FREE

Others: \$25.00

MAIL TO: INTERCEDE, 234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite 405, Toronto, ON, M4P 1K5

Yes, please send me a receipt for my subscription, membership or donation  No receipt required