



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, October 8, 2023

Welcoming and Celebrating Our Neighbors from Near and Far

A few weeks ago, “communities across the United States participated in Welcoming America’s Welcoming Week. The annual campaign has rapidly expanded over the years to include more than 650 local events that showcase each community’s commitment to fostering welcoming and belonging for all their residents, including their immigrant neighbors. Since its inception in 2012, Welcoming Week has concluded on Citizenship Day, September 17. **This year, with more than 130 naturalization ceremonies across the nation, over 6,900 individuals became new U.S. citizens.**

Although conversations about immigration often focus on federal issues, many local governments, chambers of commerce, and nonprofits are committed to celebrating their immigrant neighbors and the **positive effects of immigration, such as population growth, spurred innovation, and the revitalization of neighborhoods.** Welcoming Week is a moment each year that captures and highlights these commitments at the local level, with events celebrating culture and diversity intertwined with community-led action to build infrastructure and policies that offer opportunities for every resident to thrive.” (Rich André, Asma Easa, Micaela McConnell, Paloma Ramos, *American Immigration Council*, 9/22/23)

For over seven years, the Philadelphia Mayor’s Office for Public Engagement has shown its commitment to this national cause by coordinating events throughout the city. This year, the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) offered events tied to the theme of “Destination Belonging.” “OIA believes that being welcoming is more than being friendly, tolerant, and peaceful. **A community needs intentional and inclusive policies, practices, and norms that enable all residents to live and contribute fully.** Welcoming Week helps communities create a thriving environment for all.” (Mayor’s office of Public Engagement, 9/5/23)

“Although Welcoming Week 2023 has come to a close, communities work tirelessly year-round to develop and execute concrete strategies that ensure all residents have access to the tools and support they need to succeed and contribute to their communities.” (ibid., André et al.)

On a discouraging note, a federal judge in Texas recently ruled that The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, a beacon of hope for hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, has been declared unlawful. **“DACA was created in 2012 and has since provided nearly 900,000 young adult migrants brought to the United States as children with safety and stability.** DACA has protected these young people, known as Dreamers, from deportation and given them legal work authorization, allowing them to remain among their family and friends and continue to contribute to the communities they grew up in.” (*Democratic Values*, 9/19/23) [Sign the petition to preserve DACA and allow these young people who call America home to stay.](#)

“You taught us that all peoples are neighbors. Remove all the false boundaries that set limits to our love. Teach us your ways, O Lord!” (Intercession from *Magnificat*, 9/19/23)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.