

Immigration outreach among CCHD grant recipients in Baltimore Archdiocese

Owen Charles' passion for easing the plight of the immigrant predates assisting Joy, his wife of 34 years, in the matter.

He is the chairman of the board of the Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC), which is based at St. Matthew Church in Northwood. Charles has been a parishioner there since 1988. He was 20 in 1974, when he followed his mother to Baltimore from their home in Trinidad and Tobago.

"She recognized there was going to be more opportunity here for her kids," said Charles, retired after a career as a property assessor for the state of Maryland.

He described several hurdles in helping his then-fiancée, another immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago, live permanently in the U.S.

"It didn't seem as simple as it should have been," Charles said. "I vowed then, that I was going to assist as many people as possible with their paperwork."

Charles represented ISOC at St. Francis of Assisi in Baltimore Aug. 24, when it received a national grant of \$30,000 from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

A total of \$405,000 in national and local grants were distributed to institutions in the Archdiocese of Baltimore on behalf of CCHD by Bishop Mark Brennan.

“This is not tangential,” Bishop Brennan said. “It is essential, to rectify what is wrong in the society in which we live.”

He joined an annual luncheon at St. Francis of Assisi, where the pastor, Monsignor William F. Burke, also serves at the archdiocesan director for CCHD.

Other guests included Ralph McCloud, the outreach’s national director; Monsignor Richard J. Bozzelli, pastor of St. Bernardine in Baltimore and a fellow member of the local CCHD board; and Father Ty Hullinger, a northeast Baltimore pastor who serves on the board of directors of ISOC.

Charles described St. Matthew, where Father Joseph Muth’s parish serves Catholics from more than 30 nations, as a “natural fit” for the outreach’s home.

“We offer legal services, and help in finding jobs, housing and health care,” said Pat Shannon Jones, ISOC director, whose office is housed at her parish. “St. Matthew is an incredible resource. It gives us guidance and direction, and helps us do our jobs well.”

Jones, whose contingent included Mikhail and Stan, asylum seekers from Russia, said that ISOC has helped people from 114 nations.

Bishop Brennan referenced the formation of CCHD in 1969, “when we were just emerging from a period of violence” in the nation’s cities, including Baltimore.

“Guess what,” he added. “It’s still a problem, isn’t it?”

Bishop Brennan noted that CCHD doesn’t just address urban woes.

“There are folks in the backwoods of Maine who are unemployed,” he said. “St. Paul taught that we’re all connected. If we can help others elsewhere, then we’ll have justice, we’ll have social peace.”

Also receiving national grants were the No Boundaries Coalition, \$75,000; United Workers Association, \$70,000; BRIDGE of Maryland, \$50,000; Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD), \$50,000; North East Housing Initiative, \$50,000; and People Working Together in Howard, \$40,000.

The following received local grants: Youth Empowered Society, \$20,000; Charm City Land Trusts Inc., \$15,000; and Youth as Resources, \$5,000.

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