MONA
Michigan Office for New Americans
News Connection
August 2015

Director's Message

Welcome to the MONA News Connection. We are excited and proud to present this inaugural issue, the first of many, that will highlight,

Educate and inform you of all the good things happening to attract, welcome, and engage new Americans in Michigan.

The Michigan Office for New Americans (MONA) was created to help grow Michigan's economy by attracting and retaining global talent, and to promote the skills, energy and entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant communities and to make Michigan a more welcoming state.

As director of the Michigan Office for New Americans, I look forward to working with you as we make our state a welcoming place for all those coming to Michigan from around the globe to start a business, work at a successful career, get an education, raise a family, and contribute to Michigan's culture and economy. We have a very bright future ahead of us.

We want to hear from you! Send us your news articles, tells us your stories, and let us know what you would like to see more of in the coming issues of the MONA News *Connection*.

Best regards,

Bing Goei
Director

Inside This Issue:

- American Arab Chamber of Commerce
- The Tejara Global Business Development Center
- Entrepreneur Seminars
- LARA's Professional Licensing Guide Program
- Metro Detroit's Foreign-Born Populations Report
- Collaboration Clears Up Confusion to Canada

State of Michigan Program Highlight

LARA's Professional Licensing Guide Program Set to Expand

More guides on in-demand professions coming soon

LARA
LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
CUSTOMER DRIVEN. BUSINESS MINDED.

AN ONLINE RESOURCE FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS
UpwardlyGlobal

True to its original purpose, Michigan Professional Licensing Guides at www.michigan.gov/skilledimmigrantguides are proving invaluable to thousands of skilled immigrants and refugees by providing important information on how to become a licensed professional in Michigan.

The Professional Licensing Guides explain what foreign-trained immigrants need to know before applying for a professional license in Michigan. Information on how the profession is organized, eligibility for licensing, tests, time and costs, other careers and credentials, setting up your business, joining a professional association, continuing professional education requirements, and much more can be found in the guides.

The original 10 guides were posted two years ago with LARA's partnership with Upwardly Global. To date, the 20 licensing guides on high-demand professions have received more than 18,000 web views. Growing in popularity, the guides have now been averaging more than 500 views a month from June 2014 through June 2015.

LARA remains committed to expanding its licensing guide program, maintaining its efforts to add five licensing guides to the webpage every six months. LARA expects to add five more guides later this fall, to bring the total to 25 occupations.

Questions? Call us! LARA has a dedicated telephone service at (517) 373-0104 for skilled immigrants to speak with state professional licensing specialists for answers to licensing–related questions.

Continued on Page 3

Partner Highlight

American Arab Chamber of Commerce

Driving business growth for its members for 23 years

Since 1992, the American Arab Chamber of Commerce has been building economic bridges by promoting and empowering the business community it serves on a local, national and international level.

It all began when a core group of Arab American business individuals charted a bold new course that laid the groundwork for what is now the largest Arab American business organization in the country. Over the years, the Chamber's mission and role has continuously evolved to serve the needs of Arab American businesses and the community.

Chamber membership runs the full spectrum from entrepreneurial small firms to fortune 100 corporations. The Chamber offers its members a wide array of benefits toward boosting their businesses. With more than 1,200 member companies, many members use the Chamber as a marketing tool, advertising on the Chamber website, in its e-newsletter and e-commerce, which generates more than 600,000 hits each month.

Valuable networking opportunities, programs, events and seminars are also offered through the Chamber. Internationally, the Chamber fosters trade between Michigan-based companies and businesses located in the Middle East by providing import and export assistance, international referrals and resources regarding the Middle Eastern business market, and sponsoring delegations and trade missions.

The Chamber is proud to actively support its growing membership by providing unique and valuable business solutions to ensure these businesses grow and prosper.

Michigan is home to one of the largest Arab American communities outside the Middle East. Michiganders with Arab ancestry are currently estimated at more than 500,000 (a number that has almost tripled since 1980), with a majority living in the Metropolitan Detroit region.

Arab Americans have richly contributed to Michigan culturally, politically, and economically, as evident in the large base of businesses that have the American Arab Chamber of Commerce on their side as a strong advocate helping them thrive.

For more information go to: www.americanarab.com or call:

American Arab Chamber Board Elects New Executive Committee

The MONA/LARA Ethnic Cabinet meeting hosted by the Council of Ethnic Chambers was held at the American Arab Chamber of Commerce in Dearborn, in May.

Mr. Ahmad Chebbani, CEO of OMNEX Accounting and Tax Services and founding member of the Chamber, was elected Chairman; he previously served as the First Vice Chair to outgoing Chairman Ali Dagher. Other new Committee members elected are: First Vice Chair, CEO of Basha Diagnostics, Dr. Yahya Basha; Second Vice Chair, Assistant Corporation Council at Wayne County Corporation Council, James Berry; Secretary, Manager of Ethnic Marketing at DTE Energy, Fouad Ashkar; and Treasurer, of Counsel at Dickinson Wright, Suzanne Sukkar.

Five Inducted into 2015 American Arab Entrepreneur Hall of Fame

Congratulations to the five Arab Americans who were recognized for their entrepreneurial endeavors by being inducted into the 2nd Annual American Arab Entrepreneur Hall of Fame. Each were recognized for their economic and social contributions in Southeast Michigan. The 2015 inductees are: Zouher Abdel-Hak of N J Diamonds; Saad Abbo of US Ice Corporation; Sam El-lehaf of Royal Furniture & Gifts; Nemer Ziyad, Ibrahim Ziyad, Nassem Ziyad, Nazmy Ziyad, and Nezar Ziyad of Ziyad Brothers Importing; and Adnan Cheaitli of Xushi Ko. The event was held in Southfield in March.

The Tejara Global Business Development Center

The Tejara Global Business Development Center, a budding one-of-a-kind business incubator and accelerator, focuses on the unique needs and strengths of Detroit's diverse ethnic and minority owned businesses. Founder Ahmad Chebbani of OMNEX and Fay Beydoun of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce, established the Center with two goals: to grow Michigan's export footprint while diversifying its economy, and to create an ecosystem that draws ambitious and illustrious entrepreneurs to Michigan.

The Tejara Center provides its clients with comprehensive business development and support services, one-on-one coaching with world-class mentors and experts, and access to capital and investors to boost startups and expanding businesses.

For more information about the Tejara Center, visit tejaracenter.org, go to http://1.usa.gov/1gQrowN,

call (313) 769-9697, or email: contactus@tejaracenter.org.

TEJARA
GLOBAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

State of Michigan Program Highlight Cont.

Entrepreneurs– Know Your Options for Raising Capital

Register Now for One of LARA's Free Seminars

Entrepreneurs interested in knowing more about available options for raising capital and many other issues important to the success of their new business should plan to attend a free seminar, *Understanding Your Options for Raising Capital In Michigan.*

The seminars will be held from 8am-4pm on the following dates and locations:

- August 26, 2015 Lansing Community College West Campus, Lansing
- October 21, 2015 Henry Ford College, Dearborn
- March 23, 2016 Michigan State University Management Center, Troy
- May 17, 2016 Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids
- June 23, 2016 Northern Michigan University, Marquette

Seating is limited! Register today at https://w2.lara.state.mi.us/CapitalSeminar

The seminars are being offered by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and the Corporations, Securities & Commercial Licensing Bureau.

Research Highlight

Metro Detroit's Foreign-Born Populations Report

Metro Detroit's Foreign-Born Populations Report by Global Detroit's John Cruz and Data Driven Detroit is a fascinating read that reaffirms the fact that our immigrant community is a tremendous economic and social asset as we strive to make Metro Detroit and Michigan more competitive. He talks about how in most areas our immigrants tend to be invisible as they blend in with native-born Michiganders, their broad base of diverse customs, foods and opinions contribute a wealth of new ideas to Detroit, which help to strengthen our economy and communities.

This comprehensive, detailed look at the ethnic landscape of Metro Detroit strives to foster better interaction with Foreign-born communities in the region, policy development and aid in local economic development. The region's foreign-born populations are describe demographically, socioeconomically and culturally by utilizing available census data from Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

Interestingly, while Metro Detroit has an incredibly diverse immigrant population (the top 10 countries of Foreign-born origin represent 55 percent of the total), making it a truly global region, the region has a lower immigrant rate (8 percent) than the national average of 13 percent.

Other findings about the 400,000 foreign-born residents confirms their tremendous contributions to Metro Detroit's economic prosperity. They are statistically more affluent and prosperous than native-born residents in the region; they possess a high skill set, applying them across all occupations and industries, often dominating the professional, health care and education services areas.

This refutes the popular notion that low skilled immigrants only end up in manufacturing and construction, and high-skilled immigrants are only working in STEM fields. As entrepreneurs, the many businesses they have started in the last century and continue to open today have significantly contributed to region's economic prosperity.

Perhaps most notably, Cruz talks about the importance of international migration to population growth and the fact that many new migrants are bypassing the city of Detroit -- a significant issue that Detroit leaders must tackle if they are serious about stabilizing population loss. He argues that Detroit's failure to capture new immigrant arrivals is among one of the most critical (and fixable) issues facing the city's tremendous population loss.

For the full report, go to: http://bit.ly/1L7XEGI

MONA Highlight

Collaboration Clears Up Confusion to Canada

Immigration Task Force, MDOT and MONA Work Together to Implement Signage Solution

Next time you're traveling on I-75 South in Detroit, you can thank the Detroit Immigration Task Force and credit their collaboration with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and MONA for clearing up confusion on Exits 47 B and C. The overhead sign at the final decision point for Exit 47 B now has the new red and white Maple Leaf symbol over the exit "Bridge to Canada" and Exit 47 C has the American flag over the lane "Vernor Highway."

What prompted the signage improvement were two recent incidents in which drivers accidently entered Canada. One involved a bus of people traveling from Grand Rapids to the Mexican Counsel Office. The other involved a motorist attempting to arrive at the Detroit Municipal Building, but instead entered the Windsor Tunnel.

A subcommittee of the Detroit Immigration Taskforce identified that the lack of signage had been an issue for immigrants in Southwest Detroit for quite some time. Both U.S. born and immigrant motorists (especially) were accidently entering the bridge to Canada!

MONA, in partnership with the Detroit Immigration Taskforce, contacted MDOT for a meeting. Representatives from the two groups met about five times. MDOT listened to the group's comments and concerns. They explored several alternatives including installing bilingual signs. Currently the Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices does not address bilingual signing. MDOT obtained feedback from other states regarding signage in languages other than English and found that only a few other states do signs in other languages to varying degrees.

Collaboration Clears Up Confusion to Canada Cont...

Immigration Task Force, MDOT Work Together to Implement Signage Solution

What became agreeable to all parties was to install symbol type signage to assist drivers with limited knowledge of the English language.

As a result of the meetings, MDOT added signage to Jefferson Street that was missing, answered questions about process and also, what signage was in progress in Southwest Detroit and lastly, modified the signage that clarifies direction on the 75 South exit to the bridge to Canada or to Vernor Highway.

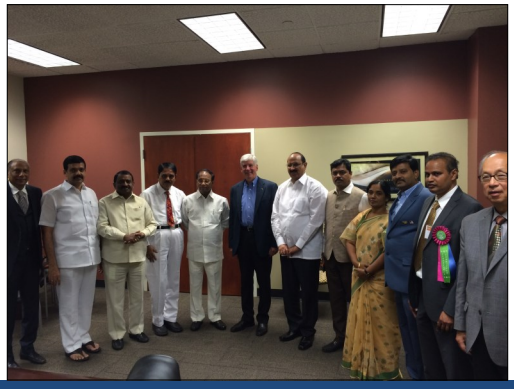
The Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC) has asked their immigration advocates for updates on any cases related to the bridge signage and there have not been any recent cases of motorists accidently taking the exit to the Ambassador Bridge to Canada.

Congratulations to all who so diligently worked together to improve the signage near streets leading to the international crossing. Your efforts have certainly helped the community and show how working together can produce positive results.

Gallery

Lt. Gov. Brian Calley speaking at the 2015 DCBA Chinese New Year Gala

MONA's Global Michigan meeting held in Macomb County during National Welcoming Week in September 2014.



Gov. Rick Snyder with participants at the Telugu Association of North America (TANA) Conference at COBO Hall in Detroit, July 3, 2015. More than 12,000 attended.

Submissions

We encourage you to submit articles, information, photos, and comments to us – your input is important. If you would like to submit articles for the MONA News *Connection*, you may submit them via e-mail to **NewAmericans@michigan.gov**.

MONA
Michigan Office for New Americans

Mission

To help grow Michigan's economy by attracting global talent to our state and promote the skills, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant communities.

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