



MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Charles W. Gilchrist
Center for Cultural Diversity



Annual Report FY 2014
July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014

Mission and History:

Vision:

The vision of the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity is to help make Montgomery County a thriving multicultural community where every resident feels welcomed, participates civically, and contributes positively to the economy.

Mission:

The mission of the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity is to be Montgomery County Government's welcome center where the County's diverse population can be connected to public and private services, volunteering, civic engagement, cross cultural activities, and economic empowerment.

Biography of Charles W. Gilchrist:



Charles W. Gilchrist was a native Washingtonian, living in the District and Montgomery County throughout his life. He graduated from Williams College and Harvard Law School. In 1975, he was elected to the Maryland State Senate.

In 1978, Mr. Gilchrist began the first of two consecutive terms as Montgomery County Executive. During that time, Mr. Gilchrist appointed the County's first African American and Latino staff liaisons, created the County's Minority Business Procurement Program, and established the Commission on Ethnic Affairs.

Mr. Gilchrist sought to open doors of participation in community life to everyone. He was among the first to see the potential of the changing demographics of the County, and he encouraged everyone to welcome the new faces and cultures that were beginning to redefine our community. The Gilchrist Center was founded to honor and continue his community service through culturally competent provision of instructional programs and information and referral services.

Since 2001, the Gilchrist Center has been Montgomery County Government's resource center where the county's diverse population can be connected to public and private information and services.

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Our Goals:

- Provide the most needed services to immigrants in the County through partnerships with other organizations or by utilizing skilled volunteers (information and referral to services, English as a second language, workforce development, civic engagement, computer literacy, citizenship, and pro-bono legal assistance).
- Be a resource for agencies in terms of finding partners to offer programs, referring volunteers, etc.
- Increase coordination and build the network of immigrant service providers.
- Promote diversity/cross-cultural understanding and awareness via activities where people see each other as individuals and not as members of broad social categories. These activities include working together on community issues/problems, language classes, volunteering, and multicultural events.

Welcome Letter from the County Executive:



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive



Gilchrist Center Partners:

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity for Fiscal Year 2014. We are working hard every day to become one of America's most welcoming communities. The energetic and committed staff, volunteers and partners of the Gilchrist Center help us move closer to this important goal.

The Gilchrist Center continues to expand culturally competent provision of programs and services to our residents. Through instructional programs and by connecting clients to public and private service providers, the Center is an invaluable resource for our residents. The Center represents our commitment to creating an environment in which our diverse residents can participate fully in building a better future for all of us.

During Fiscal Year 2014, the Gilchrist Center made great advances in a number of areas, including the expansion of services in the Up-County region. The Mid-County, Gaithersburg and Up-County Regional Services Center sites together cover roughly 80% of potential service recipients. I am pleased to see that more residents in the County will be able to access more programs and services close to their homes.

The Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2014 provides an excellent overview of the Gilchrist Center's valuable work. It gives us a clear perspective of the successful efforts made to strengthen and support the network of community services in the County. Thank you to all of our staff, volunteers, residents, and partner organizations for helping to make Montgomery County a thriving multicultural community.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Isiah Leggett".

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Message from the Director:



Gilchrist Center Partners:

Our Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Report demonstrates the range of the Gilchrist Center's work in Montgomery County. Our programs and services, carried out with extraordinarily dedicated volunteers, staff and partners, have enabled us to improve the quality of life of thousands of residents of Montgomery County.

During Fiscal Year 2014, the Center helped thousands of residents by sharing information and referrals in health, education, economic development, immigrant integration, and civic engagement. The program statistics highlighted throughout this report show the impact the Center is having on the lives of thousands of county residents. We expanded our operational sites in the Up-County region and completed preparations to start services in East County region.

I am grateful to our partners for your continuing support of our critically important mission. We are in the opportunity business. You make our work possible, and you bring hope and a better future to families throughout Montgomery County.

I would also like to extend my special thanks to County Executive Ike Leggett and the members of the County Council for their continued support of the Center's work and extending funding for our programs and services. This support is testimony to Montgomery County's commitment to build one of America's most welcoming communities. It is also recognition of the invaluable service the Center provides to County residents.

I am inspired by the record of achievement presented here.

Bruce Adams
Director, Office of Community Partnerships
Montgomery County Community Engagement Cluster

Highlights:

- The Gilchrist Center served 11,910 residents through educational programs and 6,471 residents through information and referral services in Fiscal Year 2014.
 - County residents from 83 different countries received service from the Gilchrist Center.
 - A total of 190 volunteers supported the Gilchrist Center contributing a total of 6,039 hours of service.
 - The Gilchrist Center opened its site at the Gaithersburg Library on January 4, 2014. Members of the Gilchrist family after whom the Center was named, attended the ceremony.
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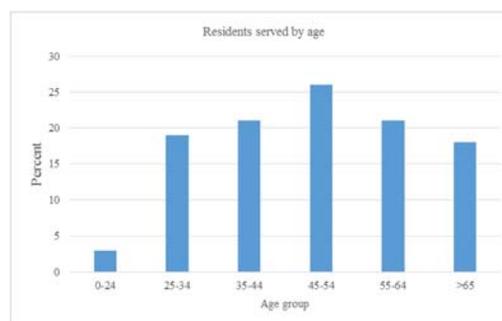
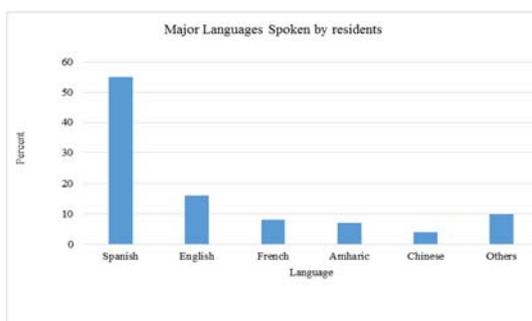


Photo: From left (back row): Don Gilchrist with daughter Maya, Maryland State Delegate Jim Gilchrist with nephew Ben, Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships Director Bruce Adams, Phoebe Gilchrist, Tonya Gilchrist, Montgomery County Public Library Director Parker Hamilton, Center volunteer Phyllis Okechukwu, Center staff Karen Zelaya, Volunteer Azar Shishavi; (bottom row) Center staff Gabriela Raudales, Patty Larson, Kaori Hirakawa, and Natalie Chhuan.

- The Gilchrist Center expanded its outreach efforts by publishing Community News and Announcements, which now has reached 1,214 subscribers.
- A series of community networking and partnership meetings were conducted to identify community needs for the launch of services in the historically underserved East County area. ESOL and computer classes began in August, 2014.

Who We Served:

In Fiscal Year 2014, County residents from 83 different countries received service from the Gilchrist Center. The top 15 countries of origin of people assisted are: El Salvador, USA, Peru, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Colombia, Bolivia, China, Iran, Mexico, Honduras, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Brazil, and South Korea. Compared to FY 2013, there is a slight increase in the number of Americans, Peruvians, and Ethiopians who attended classes or received information and referral services at our sites.



In general, the Gilchrist Center clients predominately reside in Gaithersburg, Germantown, Wheaton, and Bethesda. According to a survey by Montgomery CountyStat, the Mid-County, Gaithersburg and Up-County Regional Services Center sites are ideal complements, offering very little overlap and broad County-wide information and services to residents. Nearly half of the County's non-US citizen residents (including English Language Learners) live within a 15 minute drive from the Mid-County Regional Services Center alone. The Mid-County, Gaithersburg and Up-County Regional Services Center sites together cover roughly 80% of potential service recipients.

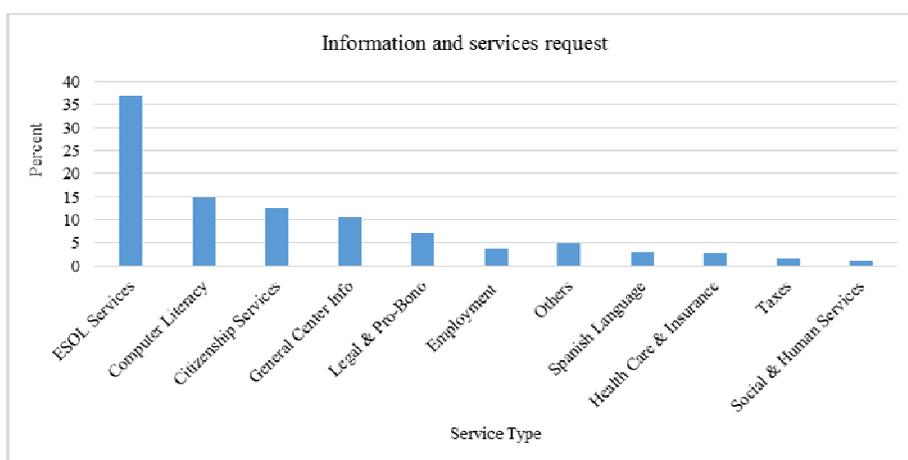
Testimonial: *“Gilchrist activities are very important to help immigrants like me. Gilchrist Center is doing a very good job for people who are in need.”*

Student, English High Intermediate at Mid-County Regional Services Center Site, Fall 2014.

Services for Immigrants and Newcomers:

Information & Referral Services: The Gilchrist Center provided information and referral services to 6,471 residents. This included 2,999 phone calls and 3,472 walk-in information and service inquiries provided at Mid-County Regional Services Center, Wheaton Library, Gaithersburg Library, and Up-County Regional Services Center sites.

Information and Referral service requests came from residents in Wheaton (63%), Germantown (15%), Gaithersburg (12%) and the East County (8%). This is a 12% increase in information and referral service inquiries from FY 2013, in part due to the new operations at the Gaithersburg Library site.



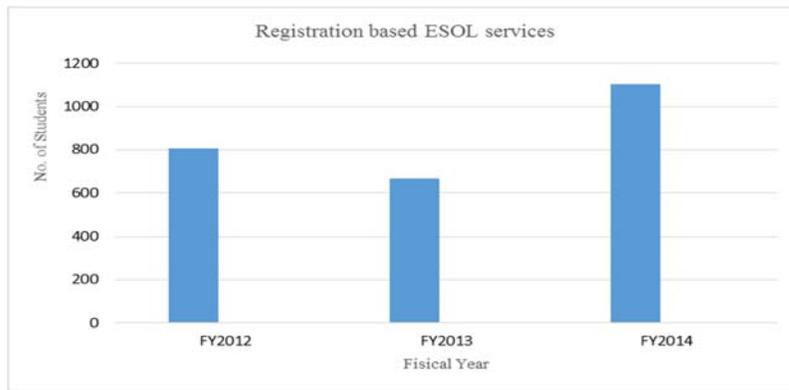
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): In Montgomery County, one in seven adults (131,000 individuals) has limited English proficiency. The Center seeks to address this gap through drop-in English conversation and registration-based English classes.



Photo: Ward Puckett has been a volunteer ESOL teacher in Wheaton since September 2002.

There were 5,528 visits to drop-in English conversation classes. The drop-in classes are designed to meet the needs of working adults, students and seniors who have changing work schedules or who want to practice their English skills.

The registration-based ESOL classes had an enrollment of 1,125 students, a 41% increase from FY2013. In addition to the Center’s classes, partnerships with Montgomery College, the Literacy Council of Montgomery County, and the Spanish Catholic Center further filled the gap in the county ESOL programs. The Literacy Council experienced high demand for its Gaithersburg classes, and, as a result, quickly expanded its program.



Over the past three years, the Center has devoted significant efforts to improving its ESOL classes through increased teacher training and support and a more stringent teacher selection process. Saturday English classes at the Gaithersburg Library site provided clients in that area with an option not previously available, which increased overall enrollment rates. This increase also stems from the institution of team teaching in Wheaton ESOL classes, permitting us to expand class size without sacrificing quality.

*Testimonial: “The school is excellent. Also the teachers teach very well, with a lot of dynamics, games and other information.”
Student, High Intermediate ESOL at Mid-County Regional Services Center site, Winter 2014.*

Citizenship Classes: According to the American Community Survey, 51% of the foreign-born residents in Montgomery County who are eligible have not achieved citizenship. To address the gap, the Center offered volunteer taught classes and partnered with Baltimore City Community College to promote citizenship-related programs and services to eligible residents. Citizenship drop-in sessions at Wheaton Library and Up-County Regional Services Center sites received 3,518 visits. Compared to FY 2013, this represents a decline in visits due to the departure of two of the Center's longtime volunteer



Photo: Up-County Regional Service Center site Citizenship class, Fall 2013.

Legal Counseling: The Center provided 594 clients Pro-Bono legal consultations at the Up-County Regional Services Center site in partnership with Montgomery County Bar Foundation. Topics covered included civil, divorce, separation and custody agreements, adoption, name changes, bankruptcy, security deposit disputes, wills, powers of attorney, limited immigration, debt collection defense, and employment cases. The Pro-Bono legal service at the Wheaton Library site moved to Ana G Mendez University System due to its space limitation

Testimonial: *"I learned a lot of American history here at Gilchrist Center). Thank you for all."*
Student, Citizenship class, at Up-County Regional Services Center site, Fall 2013.

Computer Classes: The Center provided basic computer literacy classes in English and Spanish. A total of 289 English-speaking and 184 Spanish-speaking students attended the classes. In Winter 2014, the Center began an intensive internet course offered in Spanish and created by volunteer teacher Pablo Martone.

Thanks to the partnership with Phoenix Computers, 90 low-income residents received refurbished computers at affordable price. Phoenix Computers recognized the Center as a top referring organization.

Spanish Language Classes: A total of 75 students attended classes at the Mid-County Regional Services Center site. The class was offered to individuals interested in learning the Spanish language for personal and professional development objectives.

Spanish Literacy Classes: A total of 656 students attended Spanish Literacy classes, which provide native Spanish speakers the opportunity to learn to read and write in their own language. Many educators believe such a skill to be an important precursor to English learning. The program makes literacy accessible to adult students by connecting their oral language, culture, and experience to meaningful literacy experience.

Testimonial: *“The class has been very helpful. Señor Villacorta worked hard to provide a good experience; I like the freedom I had to practice Spanish without any stressful test.”*

Student, Spanish 101 at Mid-County Regional Services Center site,
Fall 2013.

Job Search Workshops: The Gilchrist Center’s Job Search Workshops offer highly personalized assistance to small classes of 7 or fewer. Volunteer instructor, Judith Johnson, applies her 30 years of teaching experience to coaching students through resume preparation, interviews, cover letters, and learning about the U.S. workplace.

A total of 16 students attended Job Search Workshops and few participated in mock interviews with the staff of Global Communities, an international nonprofit dedicated to sustainable development.

Service Providers Network: The Center partnered with more than 25 public and private organizations in a series of quarterly meetings. Partners include: Literacy Council of Montgomery County, Baltimore City Community College, Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL), Spanish Catholic Center, Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County Bar Foundation, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Montgomery Works, Empowered Women International, Liberty’s Promise, A Wider Circle, Asian American Homeownership Counseling, City of Gaithersburg, Phoenix Computers, and CENAES.

County-Wide Outreach



Photo: On July 28, 2013, The Gilchrist Center co-sponsored a Temporary Protective Status (TPS) renewal event with the Salvadoran Consulate. More than 131 residents renewed their TPS and received information about county resources

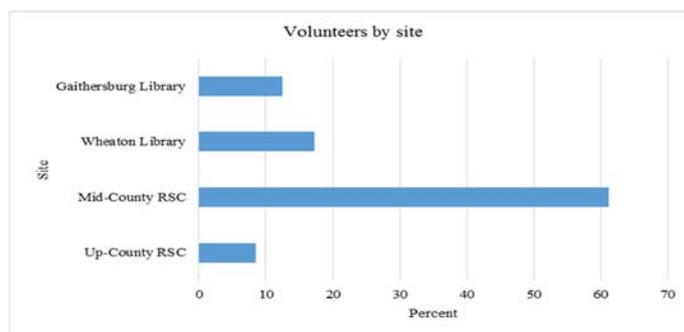
County-Wide Outreach: The Center participated and promoted its programs and services in 8 major county-wide events, including the World of Montgomery Festival, Montgomery County Public Schools Back to School Fair, Pan African Festival U.S.A., Salvadoran American Day Festival, Ethiopian Cultural Event, Annual Housing Fair and Financial Fitness Day, Taste of Wheaton, and Ama Tu Vida Multicultural Health Festival. More than 125 volunteers participated in organizing and implementing the Center's outreach activities.



Photo: The Gilchrist Center partnered with A Wider Circle and Leadership Cares on the Holiday Giving Project to give away 100 Thanksgiving baskets, which included turkeys, to local families. Center staff Kaori Hirakawa and Gabriela Raudales with volunteers ready to give out baskets, at Gilchrist Center, Wheaton on November 26, 2013.

Volunteers:

The Center relies on volunteers to assist in its day-to-day operations and to teach our instructional programs. A total of 190 volunteers supported the Center in different capacities contributing a total of 6,039 hours of service. This includes: Teaching (2865 hrs.), Teaching Aide (1203 hrs.), Class Preparation (620 hrs.), Data Management (320 hrs.), General Clerical Tasks (276 hrs.), Reception (198 hrs.), Program Coordination (180 hrs.), Event Helper (125 hrs.), Administrative Aide (123 hrs.) and Others (129 hrs.).



On December 14, 2013, the Center hosted a volunteer appreciation event at the Wheaton Regional Library. County Executive Ike Leggett and County Council member Nancy Navarro spoke at the event, thanking the volunteers for their contribution and presenting certificates of appreciation to those serving more than 100 hours.



Photo: County Executive Ike Leggett and County Council member Nancy Navarro at the appreciation event on December 14, 2013 with volunteers Jedidah Carmichael, Julie Good, Gabriela Zavala, Judith Johnson, Alan Peregoy, Rick Weaver and Bill Franz who served more than 100 volunteer hours each for the Gilchrist Center.

FY 2014 Locations, Staff and Contact Information:

Mid-County Regional Services Center:

Karla Silvestre
Center Manager

Kaori Hirakawa
Program Manager I

Dolores Ustrell-Roig
Program Specialist I

Anna DeNicolo
Program Specialist I

Gaithersburg Library:

Nestor Alvarenga
Up-County Representative

East County Regional Services Center:

Daniel Koroma
East County Representative

Information & Referral Specialists:

Carlos Iglesias
Gabriela Raudales
June Lee
Karen Zelaya
Martha Guzman
Natalie Chhuan
Sone Dore
Susan Ucanay
Veronica Tejada

Montgomery Corps Members:

Anita Mwalui
Daniel McCall
Gayathri Aluvihare
Segen Samson
Virginia Berges

Contact Information

E-mail:
gilchrist.center@montgomerycountymd.gov
Website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gilchrist

Locations

Mid-County Regional Services Center:

2424 Reddie Drive, # 220, Wheaton MD 20902
Phone: 240-777-4940, Fax: 240-777-4941

Wheaton Library Site:

11701 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton, MD 20902
Phone: 240-777-4950

Gaithersburg Library:

18330 Montgomery Village Avenue, Gaithersburg,
MD 20879
Phone: 240-777-4960

Up-County Regional Services Center:

12900 Middlebrook Road, Germantown, MD 20874
Phone: 240-777-6950

East County Regional Services Center:

3300 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Phone: 240-777-8406

Afterword:

The year of 2014 has seen a surge in unaccompanied minors from Central America escaping violence and poverty and seeking refuge in the United States. Maryland remains one of the five states that comprise 50% of children placed in U.S. to date. The latest Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) report indicated 3,884 unaccompanied minors arrived in Maryland by the end of September 2014.

In response to this challenge, the Gilchrist Center collaborated with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Division of International Student Admissions. In the summer and fall of 2014, the Center staff and volunteers helped navigate the children's complex needs, ease the enrollment process and identify County resources available to them.

From August 1 to October 3, 2014, the Center with partners assisted 794 minors and their families. The Center staff and volunteers connected 220 families directly to programs and services offered by government and non-governmental service providers in the area. The Center staff and volunteers will continue to connect and refer minors and their families to educational, legal, health, social services, child care, and employment services in the area.

"We must do everything possible to help vulnerable children in partnership with federal and state partners," said County Executive Ike Leggett. The Center will continue to work with federal, state and local partners to welcome and provide humane treatment to these children as

Testimonial: "I would like to thank the Gilchrist Center for letting us borrow Veronica Tejada, one of Gilchrist's Information and Referral Specialists, to come to our Center to assist our clients and their families. These families were very comfortable with and trusted her. Most of the time, she would be found sitting with the families answering their questions. She did more than acting as a translator. She will always be welcomed in the clinic."

Alice Bird, RN, SCHN, Montgomery County DHHS, School Health Services Center Rocking Horse Road Center.



Charles W. Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity

Main office:

Mid-County Regional Services Center
2424 Reddie Drive, Suite 220
Wheaton MD, 20902

Phone: 240-777-4940

Fax: 240-777-4941

E-mail: gilchrist.center@montgomerycountymd.gov

Website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gilchrist