



Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity

> Annual Report FY' 2011

July 1, 2010—June 30,

History and Mission:

Since 2001, the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity is 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.

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.



Charles W. Gilchrist was a native Washingtonian, living in the District and Montgomery County throughout his childhood. He attended Williams College and Harvard Law School. In 1975 he was elected, and served through 1978, as a Maryland State Senator.

In 1978, Mr. Gilchrist served two consecutive terms as Montgomery County Executive. During that time, Mr. Gilchrist appointed the County's first African-American and Hispanic staff advisors, 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 envisioned the changing demographics of the County and encouraged everyone to welcome the new faces and cultures that were beginning to redefine our community.



Photo: Mr. Charles Gilchrist (top right) and opening ceremony (above)

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).
- Provide Civic engagement academies to help residents get oriented to life in the County, understand their rights and responsibilities, and engage immigrant leadership.
- Assist Regional Service Centers to staff (via AmeriCorps) and create programs for Gilchrist Welcome Centers (set up classes, find partners and volunteers, materials, etc).
- 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.

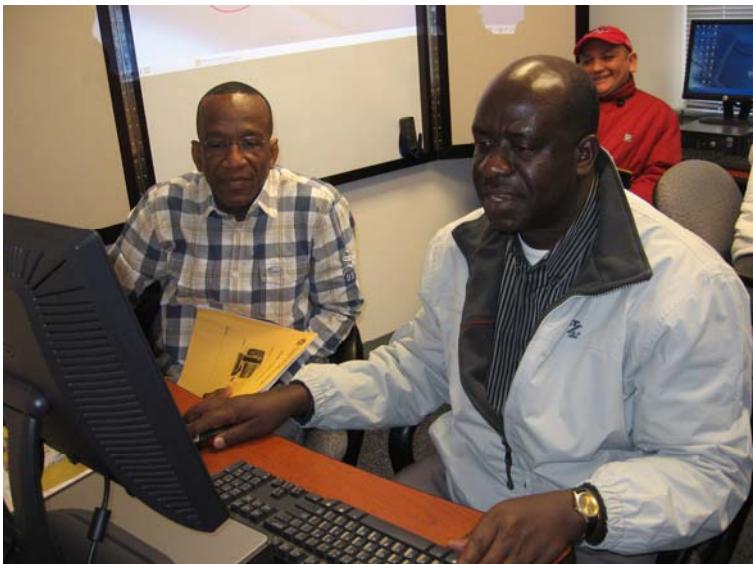


Photo: Welcome mural (top) and Basic Computer class (Winter 2011)

Our programs and services:

- * Information & Referral Services *
- Citizenship preparation and application assistance *
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) *
- Volunteering opportunities *
- Spanish Language Classes *
- English, Spanish & French Conversation Clubs *
- Computers for Beginners *
- Spanish literacy *
- English grammar *
- Pro bono legal clinic *
- Civics for English learners *
- Community building



Highlights:

The Center relocated from its first site on Elkin Street in Wheaton. The headquarters are currently located in the Mid-County Regional Service Center building and extended its operations to the Wheaton Library.

The Center also strengthened its presence in Upcounty and started operating in Silver Spring.

Photo: Gilchrist Center at Wheaton Library



Information & Referral Services:

The Center resolved **5,863** requests through direct walk-in or phone call. The most common requests were: English classes (ESOL), general center information, computer classes, immigration and citizenship, pro bono legal clinic and employment and volunteering.

Photo: Info & Referral at the Mid-County RSC site.



Spanish Language Classes:

The Center offered basic Spanish language classes enrolling a total of **87** students. The Gilchrist Center also partnered with Manna Food Center and offered a customized beginner class to 12 of its employees at their headquarters, based in Gaithersburg.

Photo: Spanish Class
(Spring 2011)

“It has been very useful as we tailored the classes to help us communicate Manna information & details more comfortably with our clients who are Spanish speakers.”—Kim Damion, Executive Director, Manna Food Center.



Photo: Basic Computer class
(Winter 2011)

Computer Classes:

The Gilchrist Center continues to provide basic computer literacy instruction introducing students to Windows, Microsoft software, Internet and social media, serving a total of **251** students that registered for classes.



Civic Engagement through English Conversation:

A pilot civic engagement program was run to foster communication between new county residents and representatives from Montgomery County Government through English conversation. The program invited guests speakers from different County organizations. For the closing ceremony the County Executive Ike Leggett joined the **12** participants and their instructors and encouraged them to continue committed to the Community.



Photo: Civic engagement class
(Spring 2011)





Photo: Citizenship Preparation at Up-county—Spring 2011(top) and Wheaton Library—Winter 2011 (right)



Citizenship Classes and Application Assistance:

We provide Citizenship preparation classes through partnerships with Baltimore City Community College, Montgomery College and volunteer run classes. Clients eligible for becoming American citizens received individual assistance to complete their applications for citizenship through a partnership with the New Americans Citizenship Project of Maryland. 2,321 contacts were made in the drop-in sessions. Montgomery College offered 2 registration-based programs at Wheaton Library and Silver Spring's Civic Building.

Legal Counseling:

The Center provided 1,170 pro bono legal consultations at the Wheaton Library and Upcounty sites through its partnership with the Bar Association of Montgomery County.

English (ESOL), English Grammar and English Conversation classes:

Drop-in classes are offered in all our sites for students who have changing work schedules or who want to practice their English skills. These classes received a total of 7,520 visits.



Photo: Beginner ESOL class at Wheaton Library (Winter 2011)

“My English improved. I learned new words and Idioms and enjoyed talking with other students” - Bertine M. (France)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):

602 students enrolled for registration-based ESOL classes offered by the Gilchrist Center, through its volunteer base, and partnerships with Montgomery College (WD&CE) for its Wheaton locations, and the Literacy Council of Montgomery County and the Spanish Catholic Center for its Upcounty site.

Life skills, educational and cultural programs:

Our offerings also include Spanish literacy, Spanish and French Conversation Clubs and other cultural programs such as “Go”, an Asian strategy game.



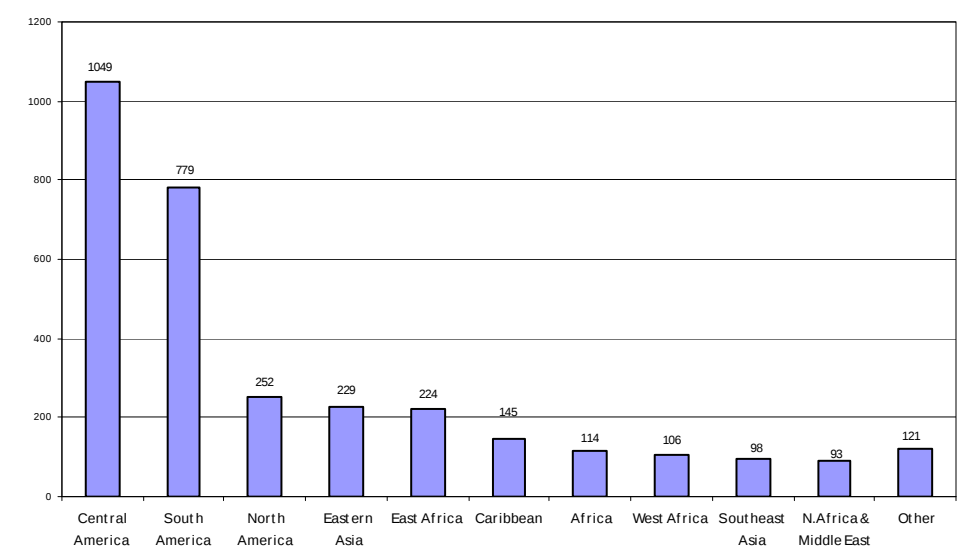
Who we serve:

By Country of Origin:

Center participants come from a wide range of countries.

The top 15 countries of origin of participants sampled are: El Salvador (662), Peru (352), USA (241), Ethiopia (192), China (132), Colombia (121), Honduras (120), Mexico (112), Guatemala (108), Bolivia (104), Ecuador (80), Cameroon (80), South Korea (75), Dominican Republic (57) and Haiti (55).

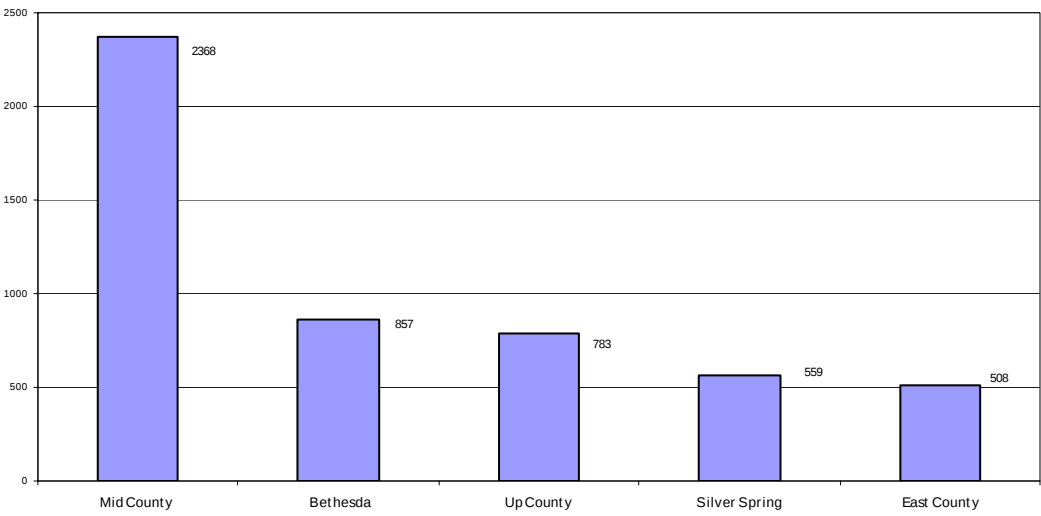
Sample: 3,331 entries



By Zip Codes:

The majority of the participants sampled were from the Mid-County area, followed by Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Upcounty in third place.

Sample: 5,075 entries



Volunteers:



Photo: Volunteer appreciation celebration at Silver Spring Civic Building—Fall 2010

The Center relies on volunteers to run its day-to-day operations and teach its programs. During FY'11 **118** volunteers supported the Center in many different capacities, contributing **4,130** hours. Among the activities that our volunteers performed:

- teaching : **2,551** hours
- reception and information and referral: **590** hours
- teaching aide: **290** hours
- administrative aide: **278** hours
- data entry: **157** hours
- class preparation: **91** hours
- general clerical: **62** hours
- database management: **54** hours
- other: **57** hours.

Meet our Staff:

During FY'11 the Gilchrist Center's staff members were:

Latino Liaison:
Karla Silvestre

Program Specialist:
Kaori Hirakawa
Dolores Ustrell Roig

Program Coordinator (AmeriCorp fellow):
Hindeke Ammanuel
Patricia Larson
Susan Ucanay

Information & Referral Specialist:
Natalie Chhuan
Martha Guzman
Lidia Hernandez
Chicong Le
Digna Nolasco
Gabriela Raudales
Brauna Salinas
Veronica Tejada



Photo: Staff and volunteers at the Mid-County RSC site



Locations and Contact Information:

Main number: (240)777- 4940

Fax number: (240)777-4941



Headquarters: Mid-County Regional Services Center

2424 Reddie Drive, Suite 220

Wheaton, MD 20902

tel: 240.777.4940

Hours of operation:

Monday through Thursday: 9 am to 4 pm

Upcounty Site:

12900 Middlebrook
Road

Germantown, MD

20874

tel: 240.777.6950

Hours of operation:

Monday through

Friday:

4:30 to 8 pm

Wheaton Library Site:

11701 Georgia Avenue

Wheaton, MD 20902

tel: 240.777.4950

Hours of operation:

Tuesday through Thurs-
day:

4:30 to 8 pm

Saturday: 10 am to 4 pm

Silver Spring Site:

1 Veteran's Place

Silver Spring, MD

20910

tel: 240.777.5303



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