

Free service for migrants opens April 25

Written by Administrator
Saturday, 16 April 2011 08:16



Beginning April 25, the New York Daily News and City University of New York (CUNY) are launching the eighth annual Citizenship NOW! hotline which offers free information to immigrants as they travel the complex road to citizenship.

Citizenship NOW!, believed to be the largest program of its kind in the nation, was co-launched by the Daily News and CUNY in April 2004 to address the systemic lack of access to free immigration information for the people who need it most.

WXTV Univision 41 and WADO 1280 AM Radio provide extensive outreach every year to the Hispanic community as the Spanish-language media partners for the program.

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WXTV has been a partner of the program for the past five years.

The station's coverage includes live-coverage, on-air promotional announcements, and special news segments.

This year's week-long hotline will operate from April 25 to April 29, between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., with nearly 400 trained counselors available by telephone over the course of the week.

Calls will be answered in English and Spanish, as well as Mandarin or Cantonese, Russian, Korean, Italian, Haitian Creole, Bengali, Polish, French, Yiddish and Arabic.

Participating volunteers come from the CUNY School of Law, the Legal Aid Society, the New York Immigration Coalition, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the CUNY Immigration Centers, CUNY campuses, and many other community-based organizations and elected officials offices.

This year's sponsors include the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the State Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance and Gristedes.

Since its inception, the Citizenship NOW! program has helped more than 85,000 people.

Citizenship NOW! is led by Allan Wernick, an attorney and director of CUNY's Citizenship NOW! Project.

Wernick is a professor of law at Baruch College and he writes the weekly "Immigration Advice" column for the Daily News, as well as the nationally syndicated column, "Immigration and Citizenship."

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“In New York, the immigrant community is one of our most energizing forces and needs all the help on complex immigration issues that we can provide,” said Kevin R. Convey, editor in chief of the Daily News.

“As New York’s hometown newspaper, it is important for us to provide New Yorkers, their friends and family members who seek citizenship with easy access to the answers they need.”

Wernick said, “Immigration has become one of the most important issues on the political scene. Each year some 100,000 permanent residents settle in the city, and approximately the same number qualify for naturalization annually. In addition, there are an estimated 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., with some 800,000 in the New York area. In the current economic environment, the need for immigration and citizenship application information and assistance is great and growing, despite existing federal and state resources for these services.”

“The Daily News / CUNY partnership is an outstanding public service that helps tens of thousands of families gain access to the American dream,” said CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein.

“We are proud to be the leading urban public university in the country in offering free quality citizenship services to its students and the immigrant communities of our city and state.”

On April 25, the call-in numbers for the Citizenship NOW! Immigration hotline will be available in the New York Daily News, at www.nydailynews.com, at www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow/call-in and on WXTV Univision 41.

TTY/TTD is also available.