

From the Desk of Secretary Sanchez

On March 4, I had the pleasure of witnessing Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett sign an executive order calling upon all branches of county government to remove any language barriers to public services for people with limited English proficiency.

It was a big step forward in our statewide effort to make government more responsive and accessible to every Marylander – which is the mission of the Maryland Council for New Americans.

Governor O'Malley signed an Executive Order creating the Council in January 2009 to assist the Governor and State agencies to maximize immigrant integration in Maryland. The council brought together representatives of government, business, labor, social service organizations, faith-based organizations and education to formulate policy recommendations for the Governor. Now, its activities are poised to accelerate with the naming of a staff director within the Office of the Secretary, an announcement we will make very soon.

In short, the objective of the Maryland Council for New Americans is to help Marylanders be as American as can be – learning English, becoming a citizen, and getting a better job.

A majority of Maryland's workforce growth since 2000 has been from immigrants. Although Maryland's immigrant population provides vital contributions to our economy, indicators show that segments of this workforce are not reaching their full potential. For example, 40 percent of recent immigrants from Africa and Latin America with college degrees work in unskilled occupations. Leading causes are: limited English proficiency, lack of job training and obstacles transferring credentials.

Studies show that our immigrant demographic is unique among American states: it is more highly educated than the native population, it has a higher income than in most states, and it is highly diverse (almost equal parts Latino, African, Asian and European). This can be a great strength in our economy if the state shows the proper leadership.

Beyond my own role as co-chair of the Maryland Council, DLLR has numerous roles to play in ensuring that immigrants have every opportunity to be fully integrated into the workforce and civic life of the state of Maryland.

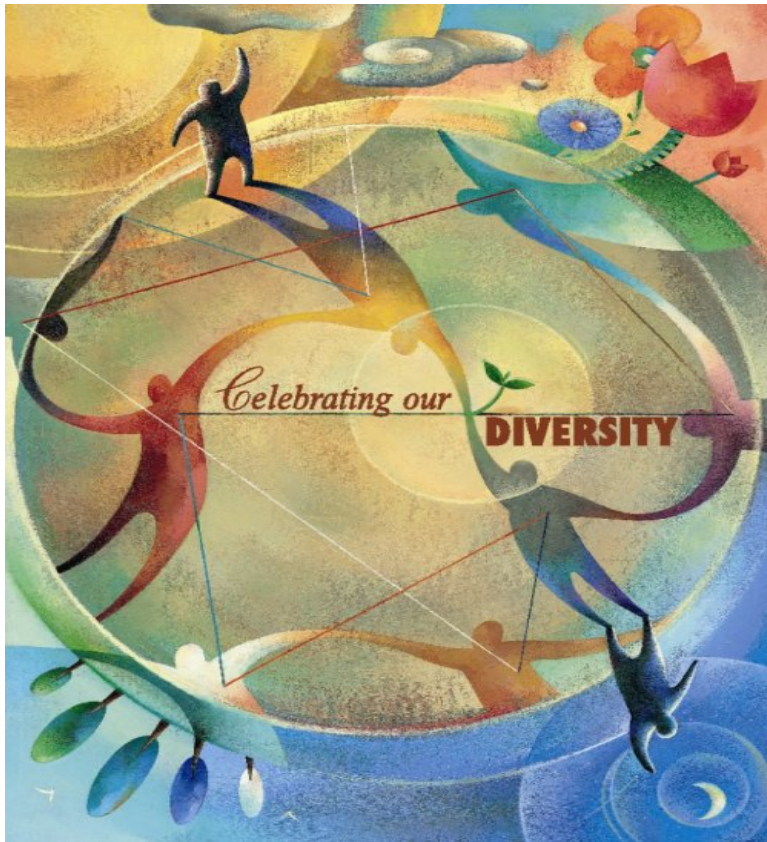
Through our Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, we are committed to improving our ESOL services for adult learners and making sure that we are fully prepared to offer these services through our One-Stop Career Centers. The language barrier is one of our biggest challenges in increasing the skills of Maryland's workforce and overcoming underemployment of immigrant professionals, and it is very much part of the Skills2Compete strategy that Governor O'Malley announced last month.

The Division of Unemployment Insurance is adding more bilingual claims takers in College Park, where we have our only bilingual claims operations. I recently spent a day there, and could see and hear the dedication of the dozen or so people we have in that unit and the challenges they face very patiently in helping people with limited English proficiency to file an initial claim or resolve issues with their benefits. Without these bilingual claims takers' skills, sensitivity to cultural differences and ability to instantly translate bureaucrat-speak, people in need would face great difficulty in accessing the benefits they need to get through a most difficult time.

The Office of the Commissioner of Financial Regulation, in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development and other stakeholders, combats mortgage fraud that often targets immigrant communities and assists homeowners in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure. I, as well as other DLLR employees, have participated in foreclosure prevention outreach events for Hispanic audiences in order to reach those immigrant communities directly.

As the highest ranking Hispanic official in Maryland State government, I take very seriously Governor O'Malley's credo that "there is no such thing as a spare Marylander." The work of the Council for New Americans is vitally important, and I welcome your suggestions on ways we can provide truly equal opportunity for all Marylanders.

April is Cultural Diversity Month



April is Celebrate Diversity Month, and in that spirit DLLR encourages each one of its employees to work to gain a greater appreciation of the diversity of cultures, backgrounds and life experiences of those around you, as well as the many similarities that unite us all as co-workers, Marylanders and Americans.

No other nation in the world can boast such a diverse population; it is this diversity and the contributions of men and women of every race, culture and religion that will sustain our nation's character and strength into the future.

From its very birth, America has been a nation of immigrants, and one that strove for tolerance and equality regardless of heritage.

While America has seen some challenging times with regard to implementing and achieving such tolerance, we have, nonetheless, emerged as a nation in which anything is possible.

Celebrate Diversity Month, which began in 2004 is about opening dialogues that foster an appreciation of the differences that separate us, as well as the similarities that unite us. We may look different, speak differently and practice different customs, but we all have something valuable to contribute.

In many ways, these very differences are what make America "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Even during one of the most divisive times in our nation's history, the Civil War, both the North and South claimed the "Star Spangled Banner" as their own national anthem.

As Americans, we share a bond stronger than any geographic, demographic, ethnic or cultural loyalty.

Over the past few months, we have celebrated several nationally designated history and heritage observances and have recognized the unique contributions of each. Celebrate Diversity Month is about everyone; it unites each of these histories and heritages into one celebration of everything that makes each of us unique and different.

As you go through your day, take time to notice the diversity in your life and workplace and appreciate the strength it brings us all as a state and nation. I encourage you to create for yourselves and those around you a culture in which diversity is celebrated, appreciated and encouraged; for it is our differences that unite us as Americans.

It is our unity that enables us to appreciate our diversity. Together, unity and diversity form the bedrock of our nation's strength and are vital to our nation's future.



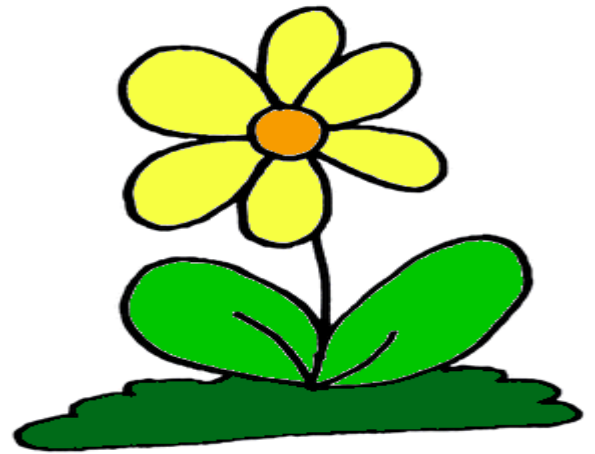
Physical Wellness Month

Physical wellness is the combination of exercise, proper nutrition and the development of responsible decisions concerning sexual, alcohol, and drug use behaviors. A physically well person participates in a variety of physical activities, manages weight and stress, and practices good self-care habits. Physical wellness contributes in the delay of disease or dysfunction until the last stages of life.

Improve Physical Wellness:

- Eat regularly and do not skip meals
- Incorporate physical activity into your everyday life
- Eat a variety of foods that are healthy and colorful
- Get an annual checkup from your doctor for prevention
- Seek medical care when needed
- Minimize the use of nicotine and alcohol
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day
- Get 7 hours of sleep a night
- Listen to your body and take time for yourself when needed

April Fun Facts



April is the fourth month of the year in the Gregorian calendar, and one of four months with a length of 30 days. April was originally the second month of the Roman calendar, before January and February were added by King Numa Pompilius about 700 BC. It became the fourth month of the calendar year (the year when twelve months are displayed in order) during the time of the decemvirs about 450 BC, when it also was given 29 days.

Important observances and celebrations in April...

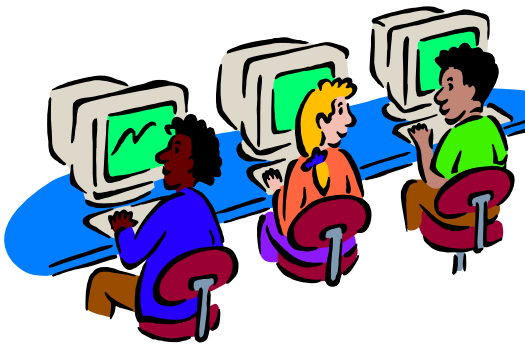
- April Fools Day- April 1
- National Fun at Work Day- April 1
- Good Friday- April 2
- Easter Sunday- April 4
- World Health Day- April 7
- Tax Day (United States)- April 15
- National Stress Awareness Day- April 16
- Administrative Professionals Day- April 21
- National Public Health Week- April 4-10
- National Networking Week- April 5-11
- Alcohol Awareness Month
- Cancer Control Month
- National Kite Month
- Stress Awareness Month

Department of
Labor, Licensing and Regulation

Office of Fair Practices

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Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day



Thursday, April 22, 2010 we will be participating in *"Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day"*. *"A New Generation At Work"* is the national theme for this year's program. This theme expresses what Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work has done all along – empower children to make more informed decisions about careers and the work/family balance by educating them about the world of work and the possibilities available to them. This requires partnerships between schools and businesses, as well as parents and communities.

Employees are invited to bring their **children, stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces and nephews** to work on April 22, 2010. Children who are **between the ages of 8 through 18** are allowed to participate. All children **must** be registered and have the approval of your direct supervisor and your department manager to take part in this activity.

Remember this is a **business as usual day** and parents should ensure that children who come to work are supervised in the work areas. A few rules to remember are:

- No running is allowed in the building.
- Children should be kept busy when they are at your workstation. You may want to coordinate group activities with other parents in your department.
- There should be no playing in the Lobby or on the individual floors in front of the elevators.
- There is to be no playing on the elevators.
- Noise levels should be kept down.
- Children **must** be supervised at all times.

If you are interested in participating in this event please complete the attached registration form and return it to The Office of Fair Practices **NO LATER THAN April 13, 2010**. If you have any questions, please call the Office of Fair Practices at 410-230-6319.