

Reaching Out to Immigrants

By Bonnie Hobbs
Friday, June 12, 2009



At a recent meeting of the Centreville Immigration Forum, Alice Foltz of Wellspring United Church of Christ, referred to Leviticus 19:34 in the Bible, which states, "The alien who resides with you shall be as the citizen among you; you should love the alien as yourself."

"I think immigration is both a political and a faith issue," said Foltz. "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, provide hospitality to strangers and support just laws. But where immigration is political, that's where the controversy comes in, because growing diversity brings fear and polarization of attitudes."

Furthermore, the economic slowdown heightens tensions. After all, asked Foltz, "How can we talk about comprehensive immigration reform that would provide a path to legalization for many people, when so many people are without jobs?"

In 1960, Caucasians comprised 85 percent of the U.S. population. But the U.S. Census Bureau projects that, by 2050, they'll be just 47 percent — "and this is frightening to many people," said Foltz.

With an estimated 12 million undocumented people in the U.S. — most who've come to join family members, work or both — legal immigration laws today favor skilled workers requested by employers, such as those from India and Asia with college degrees and particular skills.

"Seventy-five percent of U.S. immigrants have legal, permanent status," said Foltz. "But for unskilled workers, there are only about 5,000 visas per year, and the waiting period for them can take decades."

She said immigrants pay about \$90 billion/year in taxes, yet can't collect welfare. Since they only use about \$60 billion in public services, she said, "The net benefit to the U.S. is about \$30 billion/year."

In addition, said Foltz, "Myths include immigrants being a threat in the war on terrorism. But the 9/11 hijackers didn't come from Mexico." She said illegal immigrants have violated an administrative code, but haven't committed a crime just by being here. And, said Foltz, "Most illegal immigrants try hard to stay under the radar and do everything right to



Photo by Bonnie Hobbs/Centre View
Alice Foltz



Photo by Bonnie Hobbs/Centre View
Tilly Blanding



[Email this Article](#)
[Print this Article](#)

avoid tangles with law enforcement."

She also recommended certain, pro-immigration resources, including America's Voice, which she called the "most active and up-to-date group now." See www.americasvoiceonline.org.

Here in Fairfax County, said Tilly Blanding, a community developer with the Department of Systems Management, "We're the human-services connection. We try to strengthen communities and, through our Neighborhood College program, we teach residents about local government and services available to them. I also work with the school pyramids from Springfield to Dulles."

Jane Kirsch with Centreville Presbyterian Church created a chart of local resources available to immigrants, telling what each organization offers, and shared it with the others attending the meeting. Then Foltz distributed a list of Centreville immigrants willing to do jobs such as painting, carpentry, landscaping, etc.

Three people said they'd previously hired some of the men to do yard work and had good experiences. Said Foltz's husband, the Rev. Jerry Foltz, "Every one of them was polite, worked hard and was so appreciative."



©2011 [Connection Newspapers](#). All Rights Reserved. [Privacy Policy](#)
1606 King Street ♦ Alexandria, VA 22314 ♦ 703-821-5050
Site Design, Development and Hosting by [Timberlake Publishing](#)

[Subscribe to our email editions here.](#)