

Local immigrant volunteer becomes citizen herself

Says she worked at LUM to pay back help she got

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Among the 100 new citizens at this year's naturalization ceremony on Friday, Daleth Assad had been volunteering with the immigrants she was surrounded by before she received her own naturalization.

Asad, an immigrant from Brazil, said she has been a volunteer with the Lafayette Urban Ministry (LUM) Immigration Clinic since the beginning of 2016.

"I helped by making food to give to those staying in their shelter," she said. "Now as a citizen, I know I will be even more active within the clinic."

The LUM Immigration Clinic helps individuals from other countries, who are legally in the United States, to navigate the often difficult and confusing Immigration and Naturalization Service bureaucracy. Asad said volunteering for LUM was the least she could do in return for the help she received in becoming an American citizen.

"Everyone was so helpful through the classes they offer to help me get to where I am. They really made me feel at home," Asad said. Guest speaker Linda Prokopy, professor of forestry and natural resources at Purdue University, congratulated the new citizens and spoke of a time when she, too, was in their seat. "I came to America 33 years ago when I was just 11-years-old," Prokopy said. "When I graduated from college at 22, I was then able to become a legal citizen, and I did not hesitate to do so." She said growing up in America led her to appreciate the freedoms it had to offer, leaving her waiting for the day she could call America her "home," but she said it is by no means a perfect country.

"While I don't believe this county currently provides 'liberty and justice for all,' but I do have a deep faith and optimism that the 'American dream' will prevail," Prokopy said. "It will only happen when the American people, including all of you, use your newfound privileges to not only vote, but to seek out these injustices and seek out in favor for the rights of all people, including future generations."

Though she said the citizenship test wasn't difficult, Asad said she recommends anyone wanting to become a citizen look to LUM, 420 N. Fourth St., for assistance through their courses.

"It is just a wonderful place," she said. "They are always looking to help the community, and now I am part of that community thanks to them."



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Jesus Corona, left, and Shel Bo take the oath Friday. Corona is originally from Mexico. Bo is originally from Burma.



Daleth Assad, right, embraces Thalita Mendes following Friday's naturalization ceremonies in West Lafayette. Assad, originally from Brazil, was sworn in as a naturalized American citizen.

PHOTOS BY JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER