



WELCOME CENTER FOR  
Immigrants & Internationals  
SERVING SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Shellyn S. Shoenthal  
Welcome Center for Immigrants &  
Internationals  
412-422-7200, ext. 313  
sshenthal@wcii.org

**WELCOME CENTER FOR IMMIGRANTS & INTERNATIONALS  
OPENS IN PITTSBURGH**

*Aim is to Increase Cultural Diversity and Economic Vitality by Making it Easy for  
Immigrants & Internationals to Integrate and Prosper in our Region*

**PITTSBURGH, PA – October 20, 2005** – The Welcome Center for Immigrants & Internationals (WCII) has been established to provide our global citizens with the help they need to feel more at home and prosper here in Southwestern PA.

Jeffrey W. Spear, a partner at Duane Morris LLP and Welcome Center board chairman, said there is a growing awareness that the foreign-born can play an important role in our region by contributing to its economic vitality and cultural diversity.

“In order for our region to grow and avoid the worker shortages that we will see in the near future,” said Spear, “we need to focus on bringing more people to our region who are going to help us grow and prosper — people who will start businesses, consume products, pay taxes. People who add a multi-cultural vibrancy to the city that attracts others to visit or settle.

“The growth of most major cities in the northeast and Midwest,” continued Spear, “such as Minneapolis, Boston, New York and others, has come from immigration. We are lagging behind and we need to do something about it.” U.S. Census data shows that the number of foreign-born living in the metro Pittsburgh area (62,000) is the second lowest compared to the largest 50 U.S. cities.

-more-

According to executive director Andy Pugh, the Welcome Center for Immigrants & Internationals fills a very important service gap. “Until now,” says Pugh, “there has been no central, multi-lingual entry point for direct services and referrals to the many organizations in our region that provide services to immigrants and internationals.

“Finding housing, healthcare or other services may seem easy to someone who has lived here a while, or moved from another state,” continued Pugh, “but if you hail from another country, with a totally different culture and language, these things might be anything but simple.”

The Welcome Center grew out of the work of Jewish Family & Children's Service (JF&CS), its parent non-profit, which provides a variety of non-sectarian services to immigrants and refugees related to employment counseling, legal immigration services and resettlement of refugees.

Welcome Center staff have been focused on community outreach to immigrants and internationals in the region, growing its volunteer network (multi-lingual volunteers are key to providing service) and continuing to connect with funding sources, community leaders and service providers that can be included into the existing resource network..

Multi-lingual staff will assist internationals with myriad issues from finding housing, schools and health care to providing referrals to English as a Second Language instruction, legal services and job search assistance.

Mr. Pugh comes to his position as executive director of the Welcome Center after serving the last sixteen years with CARE, the international relief and development agency, where he managed programs in Africa and created and directed CARE's policy advocacy department.

Says Pugh: “I hope that the Welcome Center will help put Southwestern Pennsylvania on the map as a place where the foreign-born want to live, raise families and become an important part of the fabric of our region.”

*If you are bi-lingual and interested in volunteering, or for more information, contact the Welcome Center for Immigrants & Internationals toll-free at 1-866-774-2201 or visit [www.wcii.org](http://www.wcii.org).*

###

*For questions and interviews, please contact Shellyn Shoenthal at 412-422-7200, ext. 313 or [sshoenthal@wcii.org](mailto:sshoenthal@wcii.org).*