

## All-Chelsea Awards 2007 RECIPIENTS

### Public Servant of the Year

**Ned Keefe**

Chelsea Planning & Development Department

### Businessperson of the Year

**Ed Burke**

Dennis K. Burke, Inc.

### Community Organization of the Year **Chelsea Neighborhood Housing Services**

### Youth Resident of the Year

**Zaida Gonzalez**

### Adult Resident of the Year

**Roseann Bongiovanni**

### Senior Resident of the Year

**Joe Mahoney**

### Project of the Year

**Citizenship for New Americans**

### Contributing Stakeholder of the Year

**Gerry Lewis**

Boston University

### Lifetime Achievement

**Eddie Greenberg**

The Late Community Activist

### **John "The Quiet Man" Ruiz**

**The Former Heavyweight Champion of the World**

## *PROJECT OF THE YEAR*

### **CITIZENSHIP FOR NEW AMERICANS PROGRAM**

Few issues are more controversial these days than immigration. Yet, amongst the controversy there is consensus that encouraging immigrants to become citizens is a good thing. That process, though, can be daunting. Through the Citizenship for New Americans Program, offered by Centro Latino de Chelsea, the process to citizenship for local residents is being demystified. This new start program is being recognized for helping to connect hard working immigrants with their dreams of becoming American citizens.

Centro Latino is a nearly twenty-year old community based agency whose main objective has been to deliver services that are culturally competent and relevant to immigrants and low-income families in the Greater Boston area. Specifically, Centro focuses on services that help people overcome barriers to sustainable employment, successfully integrate into their new communities, learn about community resources, and gain the communication skills to access those resources in order to advocate for themselves and their children.

When the State funded a grant to provide citizenship classes, Centro was a logical recipient. The resulting Citizenship for New Americans Program is not only engaging aspiring new citizens, it is also connecting students to their communities, specifically Chelsea and Revere. Promoting an engaged citizenry is fundamental for the future well-being of our great American democracy.

CNAP sessions are held quarterly at Chelsea and Revere City Halls. The classes teach students about the structure of the US government, citizenship, voting rights and responsibilities, community resources and the role a citizen plays in a free and democratic society. Students also practice for the US Citizenship and Immigration Services test and citizenship interview. Students must have a working knowledge of English to take the course, because it is only taught in English. Students are given assistance in completing and submitting all necessary forms. The program also provides support and referral services, if necessary.

Nearly a hundred students have graduated from the citizenship classes to date, with a new cycle of students enrolled and similarly studying presently. The mayor of Revere and the city manager of Chelsea have opened up City Hall for classes as a means of connecting students with their city governments and supporting immigrants in their respective communities. The Chelsea City Council most recently commended the twenty graduates for their work to become citizens.