

Groups focus on immigrant population

Bucks is home to 47,866 foreign-born residents and 42 percent of those immigrants are not U.S. citizens, according to the government.

By **JAMES MCGINNIS**
STAFF WRITER

Bucks County's foreign-born population has grown by 35 percent in the last 10 years, creating new challenges for social workers trying to assist the poor.

That was the collective message of outreach organizations attending Tuesday's "Face of Immigration" conference at the Sheraton Bucks County Hotel in Middletown.

Bucks is home to about 47,866 foreign-born residents and about 42 percent of those listed themselves as "not U.S. citizens," according to the U.S. Census. There were 35,442 foreign-born residents listed for Bucks County in the 2000 U.S. Census.

Eight percent of Bucks residents are recent immigrants compared to 11 percent of Philadelphia's population, according to the government.

"Regardless of how you might feel about immigration, these people are here and they need help," said Selena Faulknor, case management supervisor for the American Red Cross Lower Bucks County Chapter.

Faulknor said she was seeking assis-

tance for a woman who was not a U.S. citizen yet gave birth to eight children here in the United States.

"What we have is a growing population that needs help, but they're also afraid to come to the (Lower Bucks homeless) shelter for fear of getting caught," Faulknor said.

Kathy DiGuseppe, supervisor of Penn State Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, said she was amazed by the "very diverse immigrant population in Bucks County."

"These immigrants come here seeking a safe environment," she said. "In many ways, that's all they want."

However, nationwide, unauthorized

immigration appears to be slowing, according to a September 2010 report by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan organization that provides information on issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

An estimated 300,000 immigrants entered the country illegally in 2009, according to the report. That's down from 850,000 illegal immigrants in 2000.

Illegal immigrants accounted for 28 percent of the nation's foreign-born population in 2009, according to the center, which attributed the dip in illegal border crossings to the lack of jobs here in the United States.

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Non-U.S. citizen estimates for Bucks

MUNICIPALITY	NOT A U.S. CITIZEN	TOTAL POPULATION
Bucks County	20,009	621,241
Bedminster	73	5,739
Bensalem	4,715	58,472
Bridgeton	11	1,073
Bristol	612	9,698
Bristol Township	1,807	53,999
Buckingham	204	19,095
Chalfont	23	4,168
Doylestown	97	8,152
Doylestown Township	302	18,715
Dublin	75	1,747
Durham	0	996
East Rockhill	14	5,683
Falls	1,646	33,905
Haycock	16	1,889
Hilltown	322	13,159
Hulmeville	3	709
Ivilyand	0	544
Langhorne	154	7,962
Langhorne Manor	14	1,029
Lower Makefield	1,291	32,309
Lower Southampton	993	19,086
Middletown	602	46,882
Milford	92	9,674
Morrisville	549	9,664
New Britain	20	1,816
New Britain Township	285	10,867
New Hope	98	1,968
Newtown	21	1,965
Newtown Township	573	19,135
Nockamixon	35	3,673
Northampton	844	40,755
Penndel	77	1,833
Perkasie	62	8,657
Plumstead	244	11,820
Quakertown	259	8,695
Richland	315	12,590
Richlandtown	9	1,136
Riegelsville	3	570
Sellersville	33	4,484
Silverdale	4	659
Solebury	233	8,791
Springfield	16	5,065
Telford	45	2,022
Tinicum	11	4,243
Trumbauersville	0	774
Tullytown	11	1,576
Upper Makefield	119	8,402
Upper Southampton	288	15,334
Warminster	1,448	33,493
Warrington	879	22,491
Warwick	375	14,567
West Rockhill	30	4,734
Wrightstown	26	2,853
Yardley	31	1,924

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Foreign

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There are more than a dozen avenues to citizenship or visa status, noted Fernando Chang-Muy, professor of refugee law of the University of Pennsylvania.

Immigrants from Iran and Russia can seek asylum on fear of persecution for being gay, he said. Immigrants from Afghanistan, Iraq and Vietnam can seek asylum on fear of persecution for once helping U.S. forces stationed in those countries.

African women can seek asylum on fears of genital mutilation. Chinese women can seek asylum based on the fears of forced sterilization, said Chang-Muy. The government also offers short-term visas to sex-trafficking victims who agree to testify in court, he said.

On Tuesday, some groups reported difficulties enrolling immigrant children in area public schools.

Regardless of citizenship, all kids are guaranteed education in Pennsylvania's public schools. Districts are required to provide educational materials in that child's language, said Jennifer Lowman, director of client services and training at the Education Law Center in Philadelphia. Little or no money is provided by the government to provide those services, Lowman added.

About 46,000 non-English speaking students are enrolled in Pennsylvania schools, Lowman said. The majority speak Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese. But more than 90 other languages are spoken in Pennsylvania schools, and districts have to account for those in the education process, she said.

Pennsylvania provides districts with a home language survey to determine a child's needs. "But the issue with the home language survey is that it's only written in English," Lowman said.

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