

IMMIGRANT WELCOME AWARDS

Six to be honored for welcoming ways

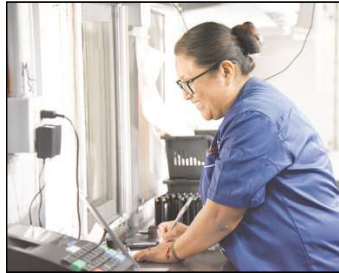
What's been a trying past year will take a celebratory turn on Sept. 20, when the CU Immigration Forum honors the 12th annual class of **Immigrant Welcome Awards** winners.

Between now and then, we'll tell the stories of the six individuals and organizations who'll share the spotlight. Here's your first look at this year's honorees, including insights from their nominators:



BUSINESS LEADERSHIP La Paloma Mexican Delicacies

The three-food-truck business co-owned by Irene Macedo Hernández and Gerardo Serrano Rangel regularly helps schools, nonprofits and other organizations by "meeting their budgets" — lowering prices, waiving service fees, donating food, sponsoring teams and being "community boosters."



Luke Taylor/The News-Gazette

Irene Macedo Hernandez talks to a customer at one of three La Paloma food trucks.

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Tam Thi Dang Wei

"A most remarkable and special person," her nominator wrote of the 99-year-old former director of the Champaign school district's Bilingual Education Center, who grew up in Vietnam, moved to C-U in the 1950s, headed up the UI's Child Development Lab and was part of the team that founded what's now known as The Refugee Center.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Amnesty International

One example of the UI chapter going above and beyond for immigrants: its hosting of fundraising events to support the I-HOPE Scholarship for undocumented students on campus. The group also partners up with other student organizations, including I-CAUSE, in supporting community immigrants.

EMERGENT LEADER

María Jiménez

An immigrant herself, the new executive director of Immigrant Services of Champaign-Urbana "inspires and empowers," working actively to "challenge the systemic obstacles that exist and confront injustice, engaging community members to work alongside her to create a kinder, more just community."

IMMIGRANT LEADERSHIP

Ishtiaq Khan

Fluent in four languages, he has worked with The Refugee Center, led peace circles at the Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center and served as a "vital resource" for newcomers, particularly Afghans, "providing guidance, translation and support across hospitals, courts, schools and public offices."

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Maria Emilia Marcerò

The UI senior, who has served the past three years as an undocumented-student mentor, heads up the Illinois Coalition Assisting Undocumented Students Education (I-CAUSE) and has been "tireless in her advocacy for the unique needs of undocumented and 'DACA-mented' students."

— JEFF D'ALESSIO