

IMMIGRANTS FIND NEW RESOURCES

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Body

THE IDEA FOR **Resources**, a Catholic Migration Office program that provides training and jobs for **immigrants**, was born in a sweatshop.

The Rev. Ronald Marino, director of CMO, said he was looking for a used furniture store about three years ago when he stumbled into a sweatshop near CMO's offices in Bensonhurst.

"It was July, boiling hot, and there were at least 100 women at the sewing machines. There were fans, but there wasn't a window in sight. The noise was incredible and there were little children sewing, which is against the law," he said.

"The owner of the place was very proud of his shop," Marino said. The Diocese of Brooklyn priest, on the other hand, was outraged. "I thought: 'The church does wonderful work with **immigrants**. We have to do something about this. But what can we do?' "

Marino came up with **Resources**.

The program offers training, internships and permanent jobs to 135 **immigrants** annually in three areas: computer graphics, culinary arts and residential and commercial cleaning.

Resources runs two small businesses a computer graphics firm and a commercial and residential cleaning company to provide jobs for the program's graduates.

The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty recently gave **Resources** a \$ 10,000 award for "effectively and compassionately meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in society."

Resources is the latest service offered by the Catholic Migration Office, which has been helping **immigrants** for 25 years.

CMO is run by the Brooklyn Diocese, which includes Queens.

The agency receives no government funding.

CMO offers English as a second language and citizenship classes, citizenship exams and legal services.

Marino said Masses are offered in 18 languages around the Brooklyn Diocese, so it is easy to help meet spiritual needs of **immigrants** who are Catholic.

Resources seeks to meet other needs as well.

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The program also helps immigrants who are not Catholic.

Resources begins with tests of immigrants' proficiency in English.

Students who fail are coached in English on the side. Tuition is \$ 400 per semester. Scholarships are available.

Classroom sessions are held in the evenings.

Hint Heung Lam of Sunset Park used to be among the sweatshop workers, but those days are behind her. She works now for the cleaning company.

"I didn't know much English," she said. She learned of Resources in a Chinese newspaper and decided to apply.

Marino said graduates of the residential and commercial cleaning program were at work on contracts Resources won through regular bidding.

When the culinary arts program gets its first class of graduates this summer, Resources plans to open a catering firm.

David Ali, a Trinidadian who completed training last year, is one of the people in charge of Resources' computer graphics arts company.

"I love working with immigrants here at Resources. This is a place where they can feel welcomed," he said.

Graphic

TODD MAISEL ON JOB: The Rev. Ronald Marino (l.), head of Resources job training, works with David Ali (at computer) and teacher Giovanni Mainardi.

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