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Citizenship clinic helps dreams become reality

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Kamran Abdullah, a permanent U.S. resident, attended Saturday's citizenship workshop at Casa Azafran. / Dipti Vaidya / The Tennessean

Written by Richel Albright The Tennessean

Martha Lugo and Kamaran Abdullah love the United States. Combined, they've waited to become citizens for more than three decades.

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That dream is within reach for one but nearly impossible for the other.

The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition on Saturday held a citizenship clinic at Casa Azafran. Lugo helped those, like Abdullah, begin their process of applying to become a U.S. citizen.

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"I want to be part of this community," said Lugo, who has been in Nashville for 22 years. "It will be my dream come true."

The 50-year-old undocumented immigrant from Mexico has repeatedly volunteered with TIRRC to help other immigrants achieve their dreams while hers sit on the back burner.

"In some part, it is frustrating," she said. "But on the other side, I'm just so happy to help them and think one day I'll be on that side."

Abdullah, originally from Northern Iraq, says he has dealt with similar frustrations throughout his journey to obtain American citizenship.

After coming to the U.S. in 1999 to study at Middle Tennessee State University, where he obtained two bachelor's degrees, he has waited 13 years for his chance to apply to be a citizen.

"It's painful, I mean really, lots of obstacles," Abdullah said of the immigration process.

Now Abdullah, 33, must play a waiting game to see if his application will be approved.

"In this country, people make history, in others, history make people," he said. "That is why I want to be part of this country."

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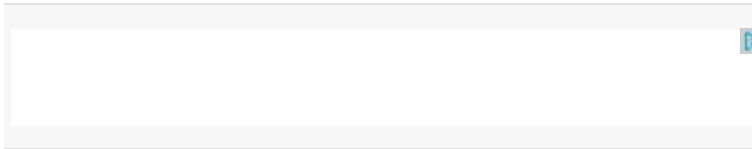
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