

# The world moves to Northern Virginia

By Jeff Davidson

I hadn't made the trip from the Triangle up to my condo in the Skyline section of Falls Church, Virginia for many years. This year, when my old tenant moved out, renovation was necessary. I returned to Falls Church to complete the renovations and with hopes of finding a new tenant. I made the four-and-a-half hour trip up the highway knowing that I would be staying in the Skyline area for four or five days. What I didn't know was how profoundly the area had changed.

It wasn't that new buildings had been erected, or that architectural landscaping or other external changes were abundant. On the surface things looked pretty much the same as I recalled. What had so drastically changed was the population of the area. In the year since I had left, 1992, to now, the area had literally, gone "international."

Pakistani, Afghani, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and a variety of other markets abounded. Nowhere in sight was an Anglo. Everywhere I

*The nations of the world gather  
in one small neighborhood.*



looked was someone from the Middle East, the Far East, the South Pacific, the West Indies, and perhaps even South America. I wasn't sure if the situation was one of white flight, or natural turnover.

I am holding the property for the long haul, so it was good to see that the neighborhoods had been

maintained. Everything still looked reasonably nice. Property values had been steadily rising. The restaurants, markets, and small service shops all ably sold their goods or dispensed their services. Still, I felt strange. Here I was in a suburb of Washington, D.C., but it might as well have been Karachi, Singapore, or Jerusalem.

Washington, D.C. has long been a beacon for immigrants from around the world who look to America for inspiration, guidance, and leadership. The fact that my old neighborhood was "taken over" is of no major consequence.

In the long run, we will all live in everyone else's countries, based on the climate and other factors that suit us. It might take one or even two hundred years, but the intermingling and dispersal of populations is an ongoing reality.

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## REFORM

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where commissioners received comments related to the resolution, "We'd rather build schools than jails."

As the immigration debate continues, citizens from Chatham County have become a part of a more organized effort for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR). CIR calls for workable solutions for a broken immigration system. The key components are to provide a pathway to citizenship, respect due process for all people, keep families together, ensure workers' rights, and

allow access to higher education. By providing long-term solutions, CIR will help our economy and make our country a safe place for all. CIR legislation has been introduced into the House of Representatives by Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois, but has not yet been introduced into the Senate.

Part of CIR is the DREAM Act, which stands for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act. It proposes a legal path to citizenship for youth who were brought here at a young age by their parents, provided that they attend college or join the military. This is one area that generally receives bi-

partisan support, despite arguments on other aspects of immigration reform. Northwood, Jordan Mathews, and Chatham Central High Schools graduate deserving students who happen to be undocumented. It is a waste of our resources to stand by as these students do not go on to fulfill their potential in college.

Residents of Chatham County showed their desire for CIR and the DREAM Act through a letter writing campaign supporting the North Carolina Community College System Board's decision to reverse a 2008 policy that barred undocumented students from enrolling. The

NCCCS is in the process of changing this policy, allowing undocumented students to attend, but they have to pay out of state tuition. There was a hearing for public comment on the issue in January where the letters supporting equal access for undocumented students to the NC college system were presented to the board.

To further educate people about the DREAM Act, the DREAM Walk was organized in January. Corresponding with the popular Arts Walk held in Siler City every month, student art was on display that showed their dream for higher education. Students from Northwood and Jordan Mathews spoke eloquently and contributed their art. Media attention from Qué Pasa newspaper, WCHL radio station and Free Speech Radio News all spotlighted the hard work and vision of our county's youth. The passion and devotion of Chatham County residents is being noticed across the state!

You cannot live in Chatham County and not notice the changing demographics. Contact your representative and let your voice be heard.

*Kat Rangel is an English as a Second Language teacher at Northwood High School.*

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