



• June 2014

# IDHR UPDATE

## Hello Friend:

We're kicking things off this June with the first ever Immigrant Heritage Month, a nationwide effort to gather and share inspirational stories of immigration in America.

In the United States, with a good idea and enough hard work, anything is possible. The entrepreneurial drive and spirit of our country is built on our diversity of origins. It is what drew the first people to the U.S. and what continues to drive American business. American success is a result of our many distinct experiences, not in spite of it.

Immigrants have played a starring role in the history and culture of the United States. For the month of June, we will focus on telling some of the stories in our own agency. We start off with our very own Director's story:

*"My father, the original Rocco Claps, was the first son born to immigrant parents, Vincenzo and Giuseppina. He a carpenter and she a teacher, they met in Potenza, Italy. Vincenzo Claps immigrated to America in 1913. Giuseppina followed in 1915, and they married soon after. The Clapses settled on the west side of Chicago and raised their nine children. Vincenzo and Giuseppina stressed the importance of education, the trades, and service to Country.*

*My father attended Crane Technical School and enlisted in the US Army Air Corps during World War Two. During the war he set up communications systems immediately behind the front lines). When he came home, he became an electrician, married his neighbor's niece (my mom Felicia) and had four kids (I'm the baby). My father's childhood home was a loud and busy place, with fresh pasta creatively cut with a clean (very clean) bicycle spoke and a place to offer a helping hand to a neighbor who needed letters translated or money sent back to Italy.*

*For Vincenzo Claps, a successful life in the United States meant opportunity, a chance to make a better life for your children, creating a decent living and owning your own home. Vincenzo and Giuseppina's son Rocco was a big success!"*



Clockwise from top left: Vincenzo & Giuseppina; Rocco J. Claps; Rocco, Sr., Felicia, and Rocco, Jr.

Whether your family's immigrant story goes back 200 years or 20, share it with your IDHR family. If you're interested, email me: [hector.villagrana@illinois.gov](mailto:hector.villagrana@illinois.gov)

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