

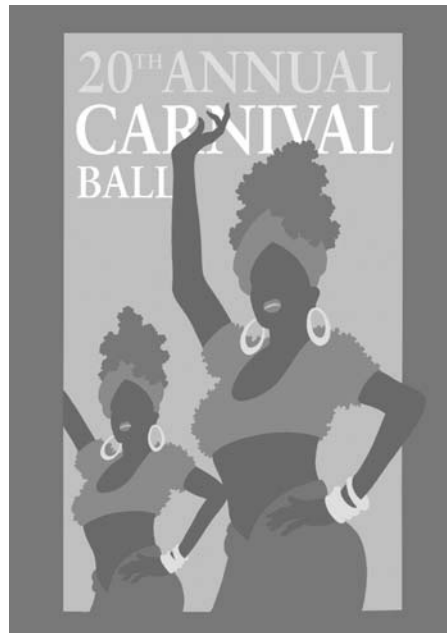


### IIRI Celebrates 20 Years of Spring Carnival Balls

Get ready to dance and laugh the night away with friends and family while supporting an important cause!

Get ready to dance and laugh the night away with friends and family while supporting an important cause! The International Institute of Rhode Island's 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball will be held Saturday, April 22, from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet in Cranston, and we want you to attend! With the mission to raise funds to benefit the Institute's programs and services for immigrants and refugees in Rhode Island, the Ball has the reputation of being one of the Ocean State's longest running and most diverse parties of the year, renown for its quality international entertainment, cuisine, and high energy.

The Spring Carnival Ball's rich history of community and culture reaches farther back than many realize. In 1939 the Institute held its first ball, featuring ethnic entertainment and food. The second ball, in 1940, featured Armenian, Italian, Greek, Portuguese, and American dances, including a square dance demonstration by Brown students, as well as Harfa, a Polish choral group. German, Chinese, and Mexican dancers were added the



The 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball poster designed by Chris Van Allsburg

following year. Attendees wore costumes they brought from their native lands. During World War II the balls were no longer held on an annual basis, but by 1961, the Institute kicked-off the events once again. Immigrants of this time wanted sociability, and the Institute responded with teas, film festivals, travelogues, open houses, cabarets, picnics, and balls, all of which were featured in the society pages of the Providence Journal. The Institute was, and continues to be, proud to highlight the cui-

sine, languages, and national dress of the communities it serves.

An official Annual Spring Carnival Ball was established in 1987 when Hilda Borem, a woman from Brazil and a talented mask and carnival costume maker, organized a Brazilian-style extravaganza. Hilda recruited Erminio Pinque, creator of BIG NAZO, and together they fabricated masks to be used as decorations on the tables and for guests to wear at the Ball. Erminio and members of the famous Living Stage Theatre Company gathered in the NAZO studio and the mask making process became a social and creative environment. "It made a deep impression on me to see the mask-artwork we had created on the faces of so many dancing guests who had come to support the Institute and celebrate its mission," and 20 years later, Erminio is still one of the most dedicated volunteers for the ball. Each year he works with the Institute's clients, students, staff, and families to create the larger than life painted cardboard ethnic images because, "It is the same spirit of communal art-making (continued on page 4)

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## 610 Become Citizens at Mass Swear-In

After much hard work, IIRI clients become new U.S. citizens.

On January 9, 2006, 610 new United States citizens were sworn in via a ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in downtown Providence.

Judge Lincoln Almond who skillfully administered the oath of allegiance swore in all 610 proud individuals, many of whom were clients from the International Institute of Rhode Island. The crowd was asked to stand, raise their right hand and repeat after the Judge. "I will support and defend the constitution and laws of the United States..."

These new citizens have waited several years to reach this point. Somewhat like finally graduating with that desired degree. You wait for it with abated breath, knowing that it is a privilege and journey well worth the time and hard work.

What steps are involved in becoming a citizen?

For many, one of the first steps is seeking guidance through an accredited agency such as the International Institute of Rhode Island. IIRI is one of three agencies in Rhode Island accredited by the Federal Bureau of Immigration Appeals. The Institute's Feinstein Center for Citizenship & Immigration Services has six accredited caseworkers and one staff attorney trained to handle specific immigration issues such as citizenship, petitions for relatives,



New citizens raise their hands as they are sworn in by Judge Lincoln Almond.

and green card applications among others.

Typically, eligibility for a citizenship application requires that one must be 18 years of age, have resided in the U.S. for at least 5 years and have a basic understanding of the English language. Once the basic criteria are met, IIRI assists with the completion of the naturalization application and helps the client to become fully prepared for the Immigration test/interview.

All in all, there are four areas of a Naturalization test/interview that an applicant must pass 1) reading English; 2) writing English; 3) application papers; and 4) a U.S. History Exam (which must be passed with 60% accuracy).

Each time an individual goes through the application process they must pay a fee of \$400 to the Federal Immigration Office, and an additional small fee to the

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## Special Announcement: eNEWS from IIRI

Do you want to receive timely email alerts and news including newsletter highlights, special announcements, upcoming

events, and much more? Sign-up for IIRI's E-news by visiting our website at [www.iiri.org](http://www.iiri.org)

## Recipe For A Successful IIRI Caseworker

### Ingredients:

Patience  
Empathy  
Dedication  
Fluency in Portuguese and Spanish  
32 Years of Work With the Immigrant Community

Humor  
Determination  
Creative Problem Solving  
Personal Immigrant Experience  
Federal Accreditation

### Add:

Immigration & Naturalization Act Book  
Working Copy Machine  
Computer  
Good Dancing Skills

### Mix with:

A Very Understanding Family



Alda: 1974



Alda: 2006

## Why does someone work at IIRI for 32 Years? Ask Aldo Resendes.

Alda Resendes answered an ad in a Portuguese newspaper for a secretary position in 1974.

Hundreds of Rhode Island immigrants are thankful she did. Aldo has been at the International Institute for 32 years. She is the IIRI staff member who has been here the longest and in 2000 received an Outstanding Citizen and Outstanding Staff Member recognition at IIRI's 37th Outstanding Citizen Award Banquet. She serves 500-600 clients per year! Some clients have been with her for over 15 years as she helps not only the individual client, but brings entire families together.

An immigrant herself from a tiny town in central Portugal, Aldo came to the U.S. with her family when she was 11 years old. This was her mother's dream. Aldo

became a citizen in 1974 on May Day. She and her husband now live in Providence, and have 2 children, and 5 grandchildren. Her 5th was actually born this past February!

Alda was hired as an IIRI secretary because of her fluency in Portuguese. But in the small seven person IIRI office Aldo quickly mastered the system and was soon doing a little bit of everything from interpreting to social service work. She fought hard for those who needed benefits - welfare, social security, and workman's compensation cases. Aldo eventually worked her way to become the federally accredited caseworker she is today and is a prominent member of our 65 person team. In addition to being a caseworker, Aldo began teaching citizenship classes in 1976 and is still facili-

tating a class on Monday nights at the Pawtucket library making this her 30th year.

"I wouldn't have worked here 32 years if I didn't love what I do!" Aldo enjoys working with the public and helping families. While she feels "all my clients are special," the elderly, with the additional challenges they face, especially move her. Seeing the smiles on their faces when they gain their citizenship after their many struggles is heartwarming.

Alda offers the following words of wisdom:

"Encourage people to become citizens. Get your own citizenship as soon as you can. Get your kids their citizenship. You are here today in the U.S. In the future laws may change so be sure you get a voice in this country today."

(continued from page 1)

from those early days that drives and inspires me to conduct the ethnic image-making workshops...creating the images which grace the balconies of Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet for the Ball each year."

Today's Spring Carnival Ball is more extravagant and culturally diverse than ever. It has become renowned for its high-energy musical entertainment and dancing. Risa Gilpin, a volunteer on the 2006 Event Planning Committee exclaimed, "It is fun to have a say in what band will keep me up and dancing all night long!" Eva Hulse-Avila joined the committee ten years ago after she attended her first ball and claims, "My favorite memory is from a few years ago, when La Fuerza Brava was the band, and our Master of Ceremonies, Dr. Pablo Rodriguez, got on stage and

was dancing wildly with some of the children!" Anne Maxwell Livingston, a board member involved with the Institute for over 20 years exclaimed, "There is no doubt that the best thing about the early balls were the nearly naked dancing girls! Very exotic and out of this world!"

This year's 20th Annual Spring Carnival Ball will feature Jose Conde y Ola Fresca, a 10-piece Cuban roots band from New York City that claims they will "blow the roof off," Erminio and the Big NAZOs, What Cheer? Marching Brigade, a local New Orleans style marching band, dancers from Belly Dance Oasis, a Chinese Dragon with Yo-Yo Dancers out of Boston, Tony Felix as DJ, WaterFire Providence, and fine catering by Russell Morin. In honor of this 20th anniversary event, the Spring Carnival Ball

is being chaired by not one but two of our state's finest business leaders, namely Bank Rhode Island's President and CEO, Merrill W. Sherman, and Taco, Inc.'s President, John Hazen White, Jr.

Tickets for the Ball are \$35 each and \$15 for students. They may be purchased in advance. Patron tickets are available at \$150 for two admissions to the Patron Reception from 7 PM to 8 PM and the Ball. A limited number of tickets will also be available at the door.

To purchase tickets or for more information call 401.784.8634 or check out [www.iiri.org](http://www.iiri.org) under "Spring Carnival Ball."

It is an event not to be missed and we hope to see you there!

(continued from page 2)

Institute. Should they fail, they have a second and final chance at a higher cost. Consider this, they have 20 minutes to take a test for which they have waited for what may seem like an eternity.

The help of the caseworkers of the Feinstein Center for Citizenship & Immigration Services and our Citizenship classes greatly increases the possibility of one's choices. IIRI is proud to say more than 90% of our clients pass the exam on their first try.

Stories of personal triumph stand as a testament to the resiliency of immigrants whose situations may appear to be hopeless, yet their American dream lives on. These new Americans are why IIRI needs to continue its existence and fill the crucial role in changing the destiny of people's lives and to make a better Rhode Island. To learn more about the Feinstein Center for Citizenship & Immigration Services please visit [www.iiri.org](http://www.iiri.org) or contact 401.784.8622.



A new citizen grateful for the help of IIRI caseworkers and teachers.

Visit us:  
International Institute Rhode Island  
645 Elmwood Avenue  
Providence, RI 02907

Call us: 401-461-5940  
Visit our website: [www.iiri.org](http://www.iiri.org)

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