

**Award:** Illinois Disciples Foundation Movement Building Award – 2013  
**Recipient:** C-U Immigration Forum  
**Presenter:** Jen Tayabji

I would like to ask the representatives from the C-U Immigration Forum to come up. While they come and join me on stage, I would like to tell you about this award.

The Champaign County Health Care Consumers' Board and staff are recognizing the grassroots organizing efforts of the C-U Immigration Forum with the Illinois Disciples Foundation Movement Building Award. This award recognizes organizations and individuals that dedicate themselves to working to build social justice movements. I am personally very honored to present this award having served as the Executive Director of the Illinois Disciples Foundation for the last ten years.

Founded in 2011, the C-U Immigration Forum is a group of immigrants, students, clergy, service providers, labor union representatives, local residents and community organizations concerned about the progress and plight of immigrants in our community.

Since the C-U Immigration Forum started, they have made great strides forward in our community. In response to the needs of immigrants, the Immigration Forum has developed strong ties and collaborations with local churches, as well as organizations like the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights, to promote programs and policies that benefit immigrants in our community as well as activities such as screenings of documentary films on immigration issues, worship services, legislative updates, and direct assistance to immigrants through a hotline called La Linea.

The C-U Immigration Forum successfully organized a local campaign to end the County's participation in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement controversial federal deportation program called "Secure Communities" which was promoted as a way to identify and deport dangerous criminals "who pose a threat to public safety, such as aliens with prior convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape, robbery, and kidnapping." However, according to the federal government's own data the vast majority of individuals detained and deported under the program were non-criminals. Here in Champaign County 70% of those detained had no criminal record, but the impact on local families was devastating. In March 2012, Sheriff Dan Walsh agreed to stop carrying out "hold" requests from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement on local immigrants.

The Immigration Forum was part of the statewide coalition that successfully pushed for the passage of a state law that allows ALL Illinois residents to qualify for a driver's license.

The Forum has conducted a number of events to reach out to local immigrant communities from sponsoring consulate visits to help local immigrants obtain passports and other documents to organizing "Know Your Rights" workshops to educate local immigrants about their rights under the law.

In solidarity with La Colectiva, Immigration Forum members lobbied in support of creating a path to citizenship for students who graduate from college or serve in the U.S. military. The Immigration Forum has trained 50 volunteers so far to help young immigrants apply for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

Just over a week ago, they organized a comprehensive immigration reform solidarity event called "Light the path to citizenship – don't block it." Over 225 people turned out to rally and march despite the torrential downpours.

C-U Immigration Forum's grassroots organizing over the last two years has built a strong and diverse movement in our community for immigrant rights. Without local movements like Immigration Forum, national efforts like comprehensive immigration reform would not be possible. It is the unwavering determination, dedication and strength of a local movement like C-U Immigration Forum that creates positive social change and leaves our community in a better place for it.

Champaign County Health Care Consumers is proud to honor the C-U Immigration Forum with the Illinois Disciples Foundation Movement Building Award.