



The Latest in Pawprint: March 10, 2017

Also available online at www.pawprint.cornell.edu

Staff voice interest and concern at immigration forum



Less than 1 percent of Cornell's nonacademic staff are citizens of another country. Yet, many of these staff members work directly with the university's nearly 5,000 international students and 1,000 international researchers and professors.

To learn more about Cornell's international population, about 140 staff members gathered Feb. 28 in the Biotechnology Building for a forum on immigrants, refugees, green card holders and citizens, while another 32 participated online through Zoom. The staff community forum was organized by the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity and the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO).

Angela Winfield, director of inclusion and workforce diversity, said the forum was held not to debate politics, but to explore how issues of immigration affect staff—and what Cornell staff can do to promote a culture of respect in the workplace around these issues.

ISSO Director Brendan O'Brien explained the differences between being a citizen of the United States, an immigrant or a refugee seeking asylum in the U.S. He also explained that the green card an immigrant is issued is based on that person's reason for coming to the U.S. – whether to study or do research, to work, or for family or other reasons. The type of green card issued determines the length of time an immigrant can stay in the country, whether they can work (and pay taxes), and other rights and restrictions. O'Brien also summarized the economic, educational and social benefits that immigrants and refugees bring to the United States.

Small-group discussions then explored how forum participants feel about immigrants and refugees, how the conflict over immigration has surfaced in participants' interactions with others in their communities, and what participants can do as

individuals, or collectively as Cornell staff members, to promote understanding and caring for all in the Cornell community.

Reporting out to the larger group in attendance, participants in the discussions noted that they have been affected by the anxiety, fear and sadness that immigrants have expressed to them – especially those students who have come to their offices with their fears and those for whom English is a second language. They were also acutely aware of “how much we don’t know” about the lives of immigrants in the U.S. today, even those who live or work near us.

“We don’t think about how much it costs to apply for a green card or citizenship, or the time away from work it takes to go on interviews or fill out and submit the needed documentation,” said one participant.

“We need to remember we have colleagues in the workforce who are affected by these rulings. They bring a human perspective to this complicated process,” said another.

“We also need support for the spouses at home with their children, alone all day with their fears for the future,” said a third.

Winfield noted that all members of the Cornell community can do “little things” to make people feel welcomed and at ease. “Just as there are micro-aggressions, so there can be micro-affirmations,” she said.

Ulysses Smith, the lead diversity and inclusion strategist for the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, gave four suggestions for providing an affirming environment:

- Choose empathy: listen and understand; see the world through other perspectives.
- Educate yourself: know your biases, privileges, blind spots; take workshops.
- Educate others: share what you have learned with colleagues, friends and family members.
- Get engaged: connect with and value others.

To learn more, Smith invited all to a panel discussion, [“Immigration Chaos: DACA Students and Higher Education Grapple With Upheaval.”](#) to be held March 17, noon to 1 p.m. in Kennedy Hall’s Call Auditorium and live-streamed on CornellCast, sponsored by the University Relations Diversity Council. The Global Cornell web pages on [Executive Actions](#) also provide information for [immigrants to the United States](#) and [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\) students](#).

Inauguration of Martha E. Pollack planned for Aug. 25

Editor’s note: The following article, inviting all members of the Cornell and local communities to the inauguration of Cornell’s 14th president Martha E. Pollack, appeared in the Cornell Chronicle March 2.

As Cornell prepares for the April 17 arrival of its 14th president, Martha E. Pollack, the Inauguration Steering Committee has begun planning her inauguration, which will be held Friday, Aug. 25.

The Cornell and Ithaca-area communities are invited to attend the installation ceremony, which will take place in the afternoon on the Arts Quad, followed by a community celebration. Those who are unable to attend the ceremony in person will be able to view it via live stream.

The Inauguration Steering Committee is co-chaired by Charles Van Loan, dean of the university faculty; Joel Malina, vice president for university relations; and Mary Opperman, vice president and chief human resources officer. Committee members include deans; university administrators; faculty members from Cornell Ithaca and the Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell Tech campuses in New York City; students; and staff.

“President Pollack’s inauguration will highlight the historical importance of Cornell, both as a great research university and as a force in society. It will be a celebration of academic excellence across the disciplines, recognizing all along the way that it is

through our students that we can help shape the future,” said Van Loan.

Other inaugural activities being planned include academic events on Aug. 24 involving students and faculty, according to Malina.

“It is important to the president-elect that the inauguration festivities begin with an academic focus, a chance to showcase the breadth of our faculty and student scholarship, and engage all members of the Cornell community in a celebration of Cornell academic achievement,” Malina said.

Pollack earned her bachelor’s degree in linguistics from Dartmouth College in 1979 and her M.S.E. and Ph.D. degrees in computer and information science from the University of Pennsylvania. She served as a faculty member, department chair, dean and vice provost before becoming provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Michigan.

“We plan to provide opportunities for faculty, staff and students to meet President Pollack, to come together as a community to welcome her to Cornell, and to have some fun as our new president opens another exciting chapter in Cornell’s history,” said Opperman.

Additional details and schedule information will be made available in the coming months.

Inauguration Steering Committee

Joel Malina, vice president for university relations, co-chair

Mary Opperman, vice president and chief human resources officer, co-chair

Charles Van Loan, dean of the university faculty, co-chair

Imani Allen, staff representative

Esther Angert, professor of microbiology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Jordan Berger ’17, undergraduate student representative

Jason Cole, associate vice president for university relations

Deborah Estrin, associate dean and professor of computer science at Cornell Tech and professor of public health at Weill Cornell Medicine

Linnie M. Golightly, M.D., associate dean and associate professor of clinical medicine, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, Weill Cornell Medicine

Kent Kleinman, dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Planning

Ryan Lombardi, vice president for student and campus life

J. Gregory Morrisett, dean of the Faculty of Computing and Information Science

Gretchen Ritter ’83, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Nate Rogers, graduate student representative

Nick Salvato, associate professor and chair of Performing and Media Arts, College of Arts and Sciences

Betsy Shrier, associate vice president for human resources

Fred Van Sickle, vice president for alumni affairs and development

Family and foster parenting are focus of Soup and Hope Mar. 2



A baby girl, who was three-and-a-half months old and weighed six pounds, needed a foster family.

Tim Shenk and his wife, Alicia Swords, didn't know anything more than that after a call from the Department of Social Services in October 2015. They took baby Jevin in and quickly learned to care for her and to love her. It took longer to discover they were becoming family with Jevin and her biological parents.

"Jevin was so tiny," recalled Shenk, coordinator of the Cornell Committee on U.S.-Latin American Relations, at his talk in the Soup & Hope series on March 2. "Reflux made it hard for her to take bottles. She slept in a front pack on our chests most of the days, and we were up with her several times each night."

Life for the new foster parents was a blur as they got to know Jevin, her parents and the team of people who would care for her. "We met her caseworkers, lawyers, therapists. A nurse came to weigh her every week. There were lots of doctor visits. And very quickly we came to depend on the fabulous teachers at Cornell Child Care Center." Family and friends helped.

Shenk said the experience of caring for Jevin reinforced his belief in the power of human relationships and "our enormous capacity for empathy, our individual and collective power to do right." Some of Shenk's fellow choir members from the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers opened his talk in Sage Chapel with song, and in the audience were his parents, in-laws and his wife, as well as Jevin and her parents, Jen and Kevin.

As time progressed, Shenk and Swords grew increasingly attached to Jevin, and felt conflicted by their "silent secret hope" that they would get to have Jevin permanently. "Intellectually, we knew better," Shenk said. "We're both committed to a big-picture vision of a world where all people have the right to dignity, and a right to the resources they need to raise their families in a healthy way."

But, Shenk said, their perspective shifted as they began to notice how much Jen and Kevin worked to get their daughter back. Jevin's parents passed every test and arrived early for all of Jevin's appointments, as well as parenting classes, meetings and support groups. "This is commitment. This is love," Shenk said.

Last October – a year after Shenk and his wife first took Jevin in as their foster child – Jen and Kevin got Jevin back full time. The couple did not lose touch with Tim and Alicia, however. They visit and share meals, and Jevin stays overnight with her foster parents once a week. "This is a triumphant story," Shenk said, "but it's not a simple one."

Shenk said he is often asked if he and his wife will foster another child. "Maybe someday, but not for now," he said. "We went into this wanting a bigger family, and we got it. We went into this hoping we might get Jevin permanently.

"But we never dreamed we'd get her parents, too."

A cappella concert to benefit Emergency CARE Fund March 11

Sixteen Cornell a cappella groups will join together for a benefit concert, March 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. in Kennedy Hall's Call Auditorium. Proceeds from ticket sales will go directly to the [Emergency CARE Fund](#), which assists Cornell employees experiencing a financial hardship due to an unforeseen or unavoidable event.

Emergency CARE Fund applicants who are approved for funding can receive between \$200 and \$1,500, depending on the circumstances.

The program is funded through the donations of faculty, staff and others. All donations go directly to employees. Any amount not awarded in a given year is carried forward to the next fiscal year.

[Tickets are now on sale](#): \$10 for adults, \$8 for students and \$4 for children ages 12 and under. Pizza and concessions will be available at the event. For more information, see the concert's [Facebook event page](#).

'One Funny Ithaca Story' benefits cancer center March 19

The third annual ["One Funny Ithaca Story"](#) will be held Sunday, March 19, 2-3:30 p.m. at The Space at GreenStar, 700 W. Buffalo St., Ithaca.

The show will benefit the [Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes \(CRC\)](#), an Ithaca-based nonprofit that serves area patients, caregivers and families, assisted in part by several campus partnerships. Tickets are \$25 and are available online.

Billed as a "comic tribute to everything Ithaca stands (and sits) for," "One Funny Ithaca Story" will be emceed by Gary Stewart, Cornell associate vice president for community relations. Featured in the storytelling lineup will be Cornell's Joel Malina, vice president for university relations, and Cal Walker, community leader and former outreach liaison for Community Relations. Other guests run the gamut from the manager of Wegmans to the sheriff of Tompkins County.

The show celebrates 22 years of CRC community service. Special recognition will be given to the work of CRC Executive Director Bob Riter, who will be stepping down from his position. His articles about living with cancer have appeared regularly in *The Ithaca Journal* and on OncoLink, and a collection of his columns, "*When Your Life is Touched by Cancer: Practical Advice and Insights for Patients, Professionals and Those Who Care*," is available in bookstores and through online retailers.

In 2013, Riter received a Town-Gown Award (TOGO) for the CRC's partnership with Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine that gives doctoral students engaged in research the opportunity to meet regularly with cancer patients and support groups. In 2016, the CRC received a second TOGO for its work with the Translator Interpreter Program that is run out of Cornell's Public Service Center.

Grandparents Day at Cornell Cinema

Bring your grandchildren to a free movie, "The Secret Life of Pets," March 25, starting at 10 a.m., at the Cornell Cinema,

lower level (first floor) of Willard Straight Hall. In honor of Grandparents Day, admission is free for Cornell retirees and current employees and their grandchildren (limit two adults and four children). Arrive early to get a seat.

Also included: free popcorn and beverages, a special appearance by Touchdown the Bear and door prizes – including a week of Cornell Athletics Cubs camp (value \$300).

[Pre-registration is required.](#) Sponsored by the Division of Human Resources. Questions? Email worklife@cornell.edu or see <https://hr.cornell.edu/Grandparents>.

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Sponsored by Cornell Division of Human Resources. Donations provided by Cornell Athletics, Cornell Store, Johnson Museum of Art and Lab of Ornithology.

4-H offers veterinary science program

A youth program, “Animals and Medicine,” to help students grades 9-12 explore veterinary medicine, will be held Friday evenings, 6-8 p.m., April 7-May 5, at the College of Veterinary Medicine.

This five-week mini-course, taught by Cornell veterinary students, caters to those interested in biology, medicine and animals. Lessons will incorporate guest presentations by veterinary professors. Each week will focus on a different animal species or group of animals, including cats, dogs, horses and dairy animals.

Hands-on activities will include practicing a physical exam, discovering the inner workings of the rumen, and learning about different anatomy and physiological systems.

“Animals and Medicine” recently received the Excellence in Animal Science Program honor from the NYS Association of Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Educators.

The program is organized by the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Tompkins County 4-H and the Cornell Vet College. A \$60 registration fee covers the cost of all program material and resources, including a pizza party. Enrollment in “Animals and Medicine” is limited; parents are welcomed to stay. Registration deadline is March 24; contact Athena Steinkraus, 4-H administrative assistant, at ahs38@cornell.edu to register.
