

BAY AREA IN BRIEF

SAN JOSE

Grant to help pay fee in path to citizenship

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has given the San Jose-based Opportunity Fund a \$1.85 million grant to launch a new program aimed at helping 500 low-income immigrants in Silicon Valley become citizens.

The Saving for Citizenship program is a "direct response" to last year's 80 percent jump in the cost of citizen application fees — from \$330 to \$595, officials of the Miami-based Knight Foundation said.

"Increased fees represent a significant barrier to obtaining citizenship," said Teresa Castellanos, who coordinates Santa Clara County's Immigrant Relations and Integration Services programs.

Through the new program, families will complete 12 hours of education about the American financial system, save \$500 toward their citizenship costs and receive \$1,000 in matching funds to cover application expenses, including fees and fingerprinting costs, for two adults.

"Low-wage, immigrant workers are a vital part of the San Jose community's infrastructure — as child-care providers, service workers and more — yet they often fall outside of the civic and financial mainstream, making it harder for them to participate fully in society and build a better life for their families," said Eric Weaver, CEO of the Opportunity Fund, formerly called Lenders for Community Development.

Santa Clara County residents interested in applying to the program should contact Angelita Hernandez at ida@opportunityfund.org or (408) 516-4699.

— Ken McLaughlin,
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