

PLAYERS

We, The People

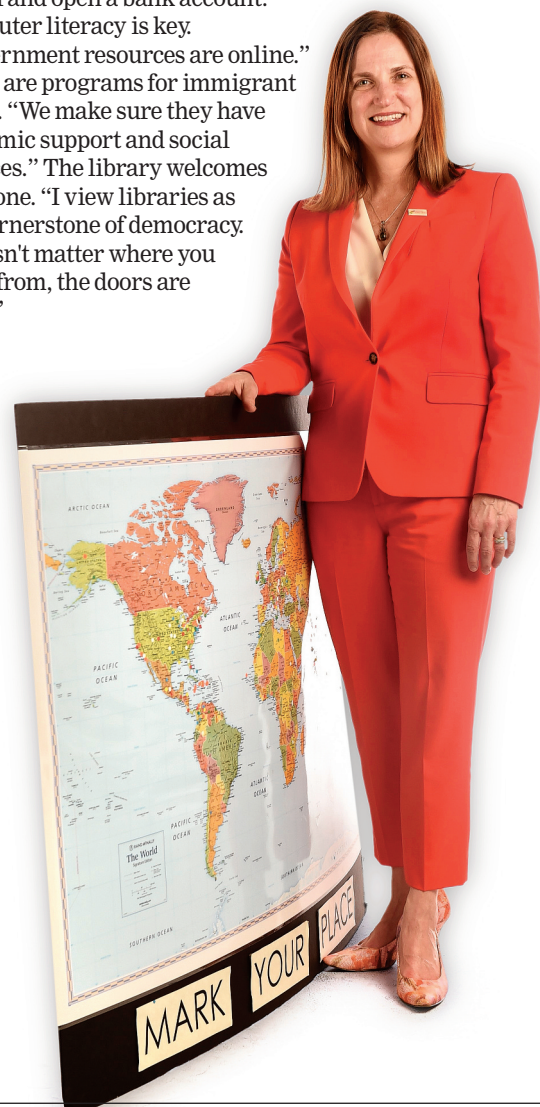
Democracy and diversity are vital to the American way of life. This July, we celebrate citizenship and civic responsibility with these Greater Hartford Players.

By **CAROL RIORDAN** Photographs by **CLOE POISSON**

Bridget Quinn-Carey

CEO, HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Hartford Public Library's The American Place helps immigrants apply for citizenship. "We work with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services," says Bridget Quinn-Carey. The municipal ID program is life-changing. "You need identification to get into school and open a bank account." Computer literacy is key. "Government resources are online." There are programs for immigrant youth. "We make sure they have academic support and social services." The library welcomes everyone. "I view libraries as the cornerstone of democracy. It doesn't matter where you come from, the doors are open."



Martha McCoy

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

"We help organizations bring people together to talk, listen and solve problems," says Martha McCoy. Everyday Democracy's Dialogue to Change process offers structure, resources and training. In Hartford, "it was used to address the needs of children with incarcerated parents." Including diverse stakeholders results in creative solutions. "One project led to EBT [food stamps] cards being used at farmers' markets." The process gives underrepresented groups a voice. "We're making democracy truly inclusive," says colleague Charmane Glass-Tripp.



Milagros Cruz

MANAGING PARTNER, MILAGROS IMMIGRATION LAW

Immigration lawyer Milagros Cruz has clients who have experienced unspeakable violence. "With the asylum cases I handle, people are running for their lives." A number of cases involve removal proceedings. "We're seeing a rise in detentions and deportations for minor infractions." Some young clients arrive as orphans. "They love going to school. They learn English within months." She describes her clients as hard-working. "Economically, immigrants are a boon for the U.S. They support their families, they pay their taxes, they'll work three jobs if they have to."



Patrick Schwab

CIVICS FIRST MOCK TRIAL LAWYER, KINGSWOOD OXFORD SCHOOL

Patrick Schwab made his mock trial team's opening statement, examined and cross-examined witnesses. "He's polished and able to think on his feet," says coach Ryan Costantini. Preparation is intense. "You have to know the case inside and out," says Schwab. He is building valuable skills. "You learn to strategize and debate." Mock trial fosters an appreciation for civil rights. "The American legal system with its rules of evidence is ingenious." Working with teammates was a highlight. "We had an awesome team. Everyone gave their best."



Pramod Pradhan

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LIBRARIAN, WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Pramod Pradhan became a U.S. citizen in 2009 after immigrating from Nepal. "Now, I help immigrants navigate town services." The West Hartford Public Library has a Citizenship Corner. "Our ESL programs are geared toward citizenship." He promotes civic participation. "I take [immigrants] to public hearings." Voting is critical. "In Nepal, people gave their lives to bring the country back to a democratic system." His son is serving in the U.S. Air Force. "He's really interested in government and law. He wants to do JAG [Judge Advocate General's Corps]."