

Gabriella Sabo's American Journey

A life's value is determined by achievements and what one accomplishes. Oxnard Harbor District employee Gabriella Sabo values her achievements and her way of life.

Gabriella Sabo is living the life that she dreamed of as a child, living in the United States of America. The journey was adventurous, long and complex. It was an eleven year process for Gabriella to earn her US Citizenship.

Gabriella has been an employee of the Oxnard Harbor District since March 27th of 2006, when she started as an Account Clerk. She quickly worked her way up the ranks to reach the position that she is in today as a Staff Accountant.

“Her attention to detail is incredible, she has great work ethic and she doesn't stop till the job is done,” said Manager of Financial Services Andrew Palomares. “She is very conscientious about balancing and making sure everything is done the right way and watching out for the District, she does an excellent job.”

Before her immigration to American she lived in Romania, where she's met and married Mihai L. Sabo.

When Gabriella and her husband arrived from Romania they were excited to begin their lives and their journey to U.S. Citizenship. She began her working career in the Research and Development Department of Borla Performance Industries in Oxnard, a car exhaust system manufacturer. As a production engineer Gabriella determined she needed more accounting knowledge in order to better manage cost estimates. After a couple of years she decided to take accounting and computer classes in order to move up.

While she was with Borla, she began the Green Card application process. The process took five years to complete and in 2002 her Green Card finally arrived in her mailbox.

“It took five years to receive my Green Card, after months of running to the mailbox each day after work it finally came,” said Sabo. “The daily running to the mailbox became such a routine that even after I got my Green Card and I got the stamp in my passport there was still the daily impulse to run and check the mailbox.”

Five years following receipt of a Green Card, immigrants become eligible to apply for citizenship with the Department of Immigration & Naturalization. But as she went to get the paper work she found out the filing fee had risen from \$200 to \$650, which meant her dreams would have to be put off a little longer.

“The hardest part was the waiting, knowing that I’d done all I could do, I followed all the rules, completed all the classes, filled out all the forms and now it was just a question of waiting to hear back from the INS,” said Sabo. After another five years of waiting, that feeling of finally realizing her dream, she was granted U.S. Citizenship on Oct. 19th, 2008.

“Becoming a naturalized U.S. Citizen was a stressful process, but not to the same degree as the first five years in America and the process of getting the Green Card,” said Sabo.

An honor and privilege that most Americans take for granted is the act of voting. Becoming a citizen meant that Gabriella was finally able to make a difference and vote during the elections rather than watching the debates on television and having the feeling of wanting to voice her opinions and make a difference by voting but was not being able to.

The eleven year journey came to a successful conclusion when Gabriella became a U.S. Citizen. “The moment really hit me when I was receiving the honor, the lights in the room were dimmed, we took the oath of Citizenship and then they started a video to Lee Greenwood’s “I’m Proud to be an American” a song I will remember for as long as I live. I was afraid people would see me crying but as I looked around the room, others were crying with emotion and true happiness too,” said Sabo. “You remember all the waiting

and wanting. But most of all you realize you're now a citizen of the greatest country in the world. And I can now sing Greenwood's song with feeling and commitment. It felt like a long and great adventure. I didn't think that I would be able to leave and start a new life like I did and it's been truly worth it. It's the American Dream."

If tomorrow all the things were gone I'd worked for all my life,
And I had to start again with just my children and my wife.
I'd thank my lucky stars to be living here today,
'Cause the flag still stands for freedom and they can't take that away.

And I'm proud to be an American where as least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.
And I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the U.S.A.

From the lakes of Minnesota, to the hills of Tennessee,
across the plains of Texas, from sea to shining sea,

From Detroit down to Houston and New York to LA,
Well, there's pride in every American heart,
and it's time to stand and say:

I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.
And I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the U.S.A

L. Greenwood