

Meet Wali Bishaar, new American citizen. Bishaar is Somali by birth but fled his war torn homeland for new opportunities about five years ago. Earning his American citizenship on October 18 was an important personal goal for him. He is a man who prides himself as a worker and a student.



Bishaar, 60, moved to Fort Morgan last year from Minnesota where he was employed in the Jennie O turkey plant. He is now part of the Cargill Meat Solutions workforce. He says that it is hard work but it is good work for him. It was there that he learned about the Morgan Community College/Cargill Meat Solutions Workplace Education program, one of five workplace programs in the nation that has been named as exemplary by the Lumina Foundation.

Although Somali is his native language, Bishaar's bridge language is Arabic. His goal is to become fluent in English as well. He says he can also understand and speak a little bit of Spanish that he has learned from some of his co-workers and some Italian as well. Language is one of his strong interests followed by the study of history and law. He also likes geology and math. Although it is difficult to determine the extent of his previous education, Wali obtained a high school diploma and studied business and law at the college level before coming to Fort Morgan.

The study for his citizenship was a course in civics and history that might challenge many Americans. Bishaar prepared in part for the citizenship exam using a deck of flashcards with questions on one side and answers on the other. He demonstrated that he had spent a good deal of time learning the information on all of them. Bishaar said at the exam he was asked ten questions orally. One of those questions was, "Who wrote the Star Spangled Banner?" Another one was about Martin Luther King.

Bishaar is in ESL II with instructor Chris Bauer who finds him to be an earnest student. Almost 100 Somali immigrants have recently settled in Fort Morgan. Initially most were men but several women, who can be recognized by their native dress, are now here as well. Some are participating in MCC/Cargill Workplace Education and others are enrolled in Adult Basic Education at 117 Main Street. Learning the English language is a priority for all of them.