

Charities USA

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FOR I WAS A STRANGER
AND YOU
WELCOMED ME

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES

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EDITOR'S COLUMN

The old saying – “Don’t judge someone until you have walked a mile in his or her shoes” – is a good piece of advice to keep in mind when considering the complicated issue of refugee and immigrant resettlement in the United States. It can prevent one from reverting to merely defensive positions and open the way to a reasoned and prayerful response. It also reflects the first principle that should guide every decision involving the treatment of human beings: their inherent and inalienable dignity.

One could begin by putting on the shoes of Joseph and Mary, who – having just welcomed their newborn son Jesus – were forced to flee to Egypt for refuge because King Herod wanted to kill the child (Mt 2:1-23). What kind of aid should they have received?

Pope Francis has lamented the response of the world community to the current plight of refugees (not to mention immigrants and other displaced persons), noting with sadness that “when a bank fails, scandalous sums of money suddenly appear to save it, but before this bankruptcy of humanity not even a thousandth part is allowed to save those brothers and sisters who suffer so greatly” (“Visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Lesbos,” www.vatican.va, 16 April 2016).

Catholic Charities USA and the entire Catholic Charities ministry are committed to helping “the stranger among us,” as the Word of God, proclaiming divine love, commands. The articles in this issue demonstrate that commitment, including three personal stories that give the reader the opportunity to “walk in the shoes” of an immigrant, a refugee, and a refugee family. ■

David Werning, Managing Editor

To comment on this issue, please write to David Werning at dwerning@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.

One in Dignity and Love—Immigration PSA:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78r5RSPj0bQ>

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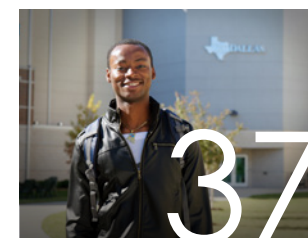
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Pope Francis' messages and gestures of solidarity with migrant and refugee communities have provided an important reminder that we must move beyond the economic and security concerns and recognize the fundamental *human* nature of this question. In this issue we focus on this important concern.

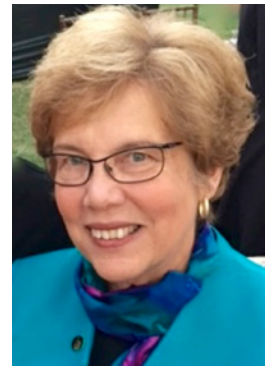
I wish to highlight the plight of those migrants and refugees that Catholic Charities meets each day across the U.S. I also wish to draw attention to the work of those who face the political, social and economic backlash for opening their doors to those looking for a new life in this country.

Catholic Charities USA represents the 177 diocesan and affiliated Catholic Charities agencies in the U.S. and its territories. Collectively the Catholic Charities network serves over 8 million people each year. Last year, Catholic Charities agencies resettled approximately a third of the nearly 83,000 refugees in the U.S. These agencies also provided legal immigration services to over 300,000 migrants and served over 37,000 unaccompanied minors.

While we are proud of the work of the Catholic Charities agencies throughout the United States, as a member of Caritas Internationalis I would be remiss if I failed to note that Catholic Charities represents but a small part of the global Caritas Internationalis movement's work around the world to assist refugees and migrants. The 165 members of Caritas Internationalis also respond each day to the needs of refugees and migrants around the world while at the same time working in migrant's home countries to ensure that each person has a right *not* to migrate.

While Pope Francis has shone a light on the faces of migrants in Europe, in the United States we see similar faces. Our Catholic Charities agencies across the country are welcoming refugees from all parts of the world and extending love and support to each frightened human being who comes to us desperately in search of safety and dignity. These are courageous and resilient human beings.

It is important to note that the story of refugees is not only one of resiliency but also one of contributing to their new homeland. **In the preliminary findings of a study conducted by the Catholic Charities partners at the Lab for Economic Opportunity at the University of Notre Dame, we found that refugee children who enter the U.S. at the age of 12 or younger graduate from high school at rates that are above or comparable to the U.S.-born children.** In addition, when looking at refugees that entered the U.S. between the ages of 21 and 40, over the first 20 years in the U.S. they contribute over \$21,000 more in state, local and federal taxes than they receive in benefits. These findings attest to the fact that refugees contribute to the fabric of our communities as well as to our nation's economic wellbeing.



▶ Our Catholic Charities agencies across the country are welcoming refugees from all parts of the world and extending love and support to each frightened human being who comes to us desperately in search of safety and dignity. — Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD

In addition to our work of settling refugees, the Catholic Charities ministry in the U.S. is facing a unique challenge: Since 2009, the United States' southern border has seen a dramatic increase in the number of **unaccompanied children** coming to the U.S. in search of protection. Prior to 2009 a little less than 10,000 unaccompanied children were stopped along the U.S. border in any given year. However, since 2009, the number has dramatically increased with 68,000 unaccompanied children being apprehended at the U.S. border last year and over 54,000 so far this year.

To get to the border, these children and families face a harrowing journey of predation by human traffickers: physical and sexual abuse and violence at every stage of the trip. Then, once they get to the U.S., their struggles are clearly not over. Unaccompanied children face detention and placement in shelters or foster care, and potentially years of uncertainty as their asylum claims are adjudicated. While many of these children likely have legitimate asylum claims, most will be forced to prove those claims and challenge deportation without the assistance of an attorney. Catholic Charities agencies across the south and west of the U.S. are engaged in assisting them in any way they can.

Families arriving at the border face a challenging experience when they arrive in the U.S. with many placed in family detention centers where children – including infants – are incarcerated with their parents until their case can be addressed. Recently, staff from Catholic Charities saw first-hand the situation in one of these family detention centers when they arrived to work with the population at the Dilly Detention Center in Texas. They found a for-profit detention center where families, including children, were detained for one to three days without showers and with limited access to sinks. Food was scarce and the lights were on 24 hours a day. After this initial detention, they move to permanent detention where Catholic Charities representatives and other groups offer their best efforts to break through the language barrier and prepare them to represent themselves in an asylum interview. If they pass this interview they then must put up a bond of \$1,500 to \$5,000 and find a family or guardian to stay with until their next hearing.

In McAllen, Texas, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley has been on the frontline in providing families arriving each day with the food, clothing, and shelter they need to survive. In the first four weeks of operation during the height of the crisis, the Sacred Heart Parish church in McAllen in conjunction with Catholic Charities, provided support to over 3,000 immigrants.

In addition to our work of settling refugees, the Catholic Charities ministry in the U.S. is facing a unique challenge: Since 2009, the United States' southern border has seen a dramatic increase in the number of **unaccompanied children** coming to the U.S. in search of protection.

– Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD

The scale of this crisis—in the U.S. and around the world—is a reminder that words and promises are not enough. World leaders have an opportunity to respond to the global indifference with resolute and tangible results:

- to ensure that all migrants and refugees have the protection, safety and basic human rights afforded by their inherent human dignity;
- to ensure that families remain united and children are no longer incarcerated;
- to address the root causes that have caused people to migrate.

Along with Caritas Internationalis, it is my sincere hope that we send a strong signal that the human rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants are not up for debate. People fleeing conflict, persecution, natural disasters, failed development and the effects of climate change are entitled to the full enjoyment of their human rights.

In the United States, it is my hope that the U.S. government's response to the plight of refugees and migrants is commensurate with the global challenge and the United States' ability to contribute to the necessary solutions. This includes expanding international humanitarian support so that individuals are able to find security and opportunity in their own countries – including the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. It means demonstrating leadership by expanding the number of refugees the U.S. welcomes – including those impacted by the conflicts in the Middle East. And it means protecting those Central American asylum seekers in the U.S. who cannot return because of widespread violence, and by designating those fleeing El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala with Temporary Protected Status.

In closing, I wish to remind us all that the organizations and workers who labor daily to help migrants and refugees do so out of a deep sense of love and professionalism but also in the face of significant political and social hostility. Nonetheless, we are committed to serving those in need with dignity. In the end, regardless of our cultural, economic or social differences we still are one human race, united in our search for the same opportunities for our families, the same hopes of a better life for our children and a safe future for ourselves.



Sr. Donna Markham OP, PhD
President & CEO, Catholic Charities USA





INTRODUCTION TO IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES:

▶ SERVING THE STRANGER AMONG US

By David Werning, Managing Editor

Before the political maelstrom that hit the United States after President Trump issued his various executive orders on immigration and refugees in the first three months of his administration, the position of the Catholic Church was already well known and had been articulated by Cardinal Joseph Tobin, archbishop of Newark: “This is not an either/or situation. The United States can continue to welcome refugees while continuing to ensure security of its citizens.”

The Cardinal’s comment – it should be noted – is simply echoing the constant teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the care and treatment of refugees, migrants, and forcibly displaced persons. Moreover, the statement is grounded in the two founts of revelation: Scripture and Tradition. It also guides the ministry of Catholic Charities agencies as they help resettle individuals and families who are seeking asylum, sanctuary, or just a safe place to live in the U.S.

Catholic Charities has been helping refugees and immigrants for more than 100 years, navigating various time periods that were marked with different challenges. At the ministry’s annual gathering last year, Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), shared that “Immigration & Refugee Services” is one of seven strategic priorities for the next five years. The main issue to be discerned is how to continue the practice of welcoming the stranger during this new moment in history.

When contemplating how to respond in any field of service, the Catholic Charities ministry has long applied the methodology of “seeing, judging and acting” to understand better the social realities of the day and to respond to those realities, especially as they affect the lives of people who are poor or in need. Applying the methodology means being attentive to the urgent crises of the moment, bringing

to bear on the crises the richness of Catholic Social Doctrine, and then developing concrete, practical ways to care for the people. Therefore, in light of the ongoing displacement of millions of people from their homelands due to violence, war, and economic inequality, the important information to reflect on includes the facts (“seeing”), the Church’s teaching (“judging”), and the response (“acting”).

This introduction will provide data from the Catholic Charities ministry concerning immigration and refugee services and a consideration of the data from the Catholic Church’s perspective. The articles that make up the rest of the magazine delve deeper into the current refugee and immigration crisis and propose appropriate actions.

SEEING

In 2016, Catholic Charities agencies in the United States resettled nearly 83,000 refugees. Most of this work entailed legal immigration services such as consultations, citizenship applications and formal requests for permanent residence. More than 300,000 clients, who were either migrants or refugees, received additional services including case management, employment training and counseling. The agencies also served more than 37,000 unaccompanied minors.

Catholic Charities provided many of the services to immigrants and refugees in collaboration with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Office of Migration and Refugee Services, which has contributed an article about the process of refugee resettlement (see page 16). The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) also contributed an article, which considers the legal aspects of refugee resettlement (See page 20).

Presently, Catholic Charities agencies are helping more than 45,000 refugees who have already entered the country. President Trump would like to

reduce the number of refugees allowed into the country to 50,000 people, which is down from the 110,000 that President Obama had authorized. While refugees will suffer the brunt of the decision, staff who provide the services will potentially be affected by loss of their jobs.

JUDGING

How to best help refugees and immigrants in the current climate is a matter worthy of prayer and serious reflection. As Pope Francis has said, “Defending their inalienable rights, ensuring their fundamental freedoms and respecting their dignity are duties from which no can be exempted.”ⁱⁱ

In responding to the care of refugees and migrants, professional training and knowledge of the field are, of course, critical, but more is needed. “[C]harity workers [also] need a ‘formation of the heart,’” said Pope Benedict in his encyclical on divine love (*Deus Caritas Est*), “they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others” (No. 31a). This formation in charity, linked to a personal relationship with Jesus, is best articulated in Scripture, Tradition, and the Church’s Social Doctrine, all of which relate the fundamental reasons for helping the stranger in need.

In the Bible, the displaced person is called most often an “alien” or a “stranger,” depending on one’s translation. This title, however, merely defines the displaced person’s situation. Two more intimate designations are given to describe his or her person. In the Old Testament, the stranger living among the Israelites is linked to one’s self: “When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God” (Lev 19:33-34). In the New Testament, Jesus raises the stakes considerably by stating that encountering the stranger is equal to encountering him: For I was “a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). The Bible makes it clear that helping the stranger is not only a command of God, but also an act of love for God.

Sacred Tradition has built upon the Scriptural witness regarding the care of migrants and refugees, recognizing the interconnectedness

of humanity, all of whom have their being from God. “From this perspective, we can say that refugees, migrants, people on the move and local populations all form a single family. Hence, human solidarity and charity must not exclude any person, culture or people. Those who are most vulnerable are not simply people in need for whom we are graciously doing an act of solidarity, but are members of our family with whom we are duty-bound to share the resources that we have.”ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) asserts that the “more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin” (No. 2241). Like Scripture, the teaching of Sacred Tradition on the care of refugees and immigrants is profoundly relational, set as it is in love of God and neighbor.

Another commonality to Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition regarding the stranger is the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the host country and the person seeking asylum. Scripture states that the equality of native and alien pertains to both benefits and responsibilities: “There will be one law for the native and for the alien residing among you” (Ex 12:49) and “Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you; pray for it to the Lord, for upon its welfare your own depends” (Jer 29:7). For its part, Tradition makes it clear that refugees and immigrants “are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens” (CCC, No. 2241).

There can be little argument over whether Scripture and Tradition teach that a country should accept people who are without a homeland or forced to leave one. The more complicated questions concern timing and numbers. While the Church does affirm the rights of nations to protect their people and to “make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions” (CCC, No. 2241), it also reminds nations of the human rights applicable to all those persons on the move who never lose their God-given dignity simply because of their situation: “They are to be provided with due process, fair trial, and basic rights necessary for them to live a free, dignified and self-reliant life and to be able to build this new life in another society.”^{iv} The Social Doctrine of the Church underscores the inalienable nature of these rights by noting that “the value of the human person” takes precedence over “military or political demands.”^v



The Church must be present with and among people who have left their native lands for whatever reason, “accompanying them during their flight, their period of exile, and their return to the home community or country of resettlement.”



Cardinal Tobin got it right: When it comes to protecting one’s country and providing help to strangers, it’s not an either/or situation; it’s both/and. This is particularly true when people are facing war and terrorism in their home countries and the only path to safety is to flee. Moreover, the hospitality shown to people in need must be matched by the effort on the part of all nations “to address the root causes which force people to flee from their homes”: economic and political instability, racism, religious prejudice, and the pursuit of profit over the common good.^{vi}

ACTING

As for the Christian community, the responsibility is clear. The Church must be present with and among people who have left their native lands for whatever reason, “accompanying them during their flight, their period of exile, and their return to the home community or country of resettlement.”^{vii} Regarding charitable organizations like Catholic Charities, they are “called to be present in situations of need in the name of Jesus Christ, embodying the ‘values’ necessary to orient their actions. They must be guided by his Spirit in their services, sacrifices, awareness-building, analyses, advocacy and dialogue. With the Gospel as their guide, they should try to build a soci-

ety where opportunities are equal, social prejudices disappear, and close neighborliness, solidarity, care for one another and respect for human rights are a reality.”^{viii}

In order to respond well to the current crisis, staff of Catholic Charities agencies certainly need to know the applicable laws, as well as rules and procedures. Advocating for better policies and legislation that respond to the current realities is also necessary. In order to hand on these good practices, CCUSA will convene a Community of Practice consisting of agency staff who will share expertise in the legal and advocacy arenas. (See the “2017 Upcoming Training & Events” section, inside back cover.)

In their pastoral letter, “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity,” the bishops of the United States encourage the Catholic faithful at all levels to adopt two fundamental stances toward people who have come to live in the country: hospitality and solidarity. Before helping anyone, the person must be welcomed and seen as a fellow child of God rather than any kind of burden. If people are able to recognize each other as brothers and sisters, regardless of the place of origin, then the acts of love called for will be clearer and more easily rendered. ■

ⁱ O’Loughlin, Michael J. “New U.S. Cardinal Tobin recalls clash with Trump running mate over Syrian refugees.” *America: The Jesuit Review*. America Press Inc., 16 October 2016. Web. 10 March 2017.

ⁱⁱ Address to the Sixth International Forum on Migration and Peace, 21 Feb 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons*. (Vatican City, 2013): No. 10

^{iv} *Ibid*, p. 4.

^v *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005): No. 505.

^{vi} *Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons*. (Vatican City, 2013): No. 81.

^{vii} *Ibid*, No. 85.

^{viii} *Ibid*, No. 102.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES AND AMERICORPS:

GETTING THINGS DONE

► FOR NEW AMERICANS

By Sarah Hendley, Manager, Corporation for National and Community Service Programs

Summary

Currently, 36 Catholic Charities agencies are receiving 53 full-time staff equivalents for refugee resettlement and immigration legal service programs through the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps Programs, as part of a national intermediary grant managed by Catholic Charities USA. CCUSA currently has two refugee & immigration oriented AmeriCorps Programs, the New Americans VISTA Program and the Refugee Resettlement AmeriCorps National Program.

Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that has enabled more than a million Americans to improve the lives of their fellow citizens through service and is often characterized as the "domestic Peace Corps." AmeriCorps is the largest program at CNCS, with three different types of AmeriCorps programs: AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), AmeriCorps State and National, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

AmeriCorps VISTA was the original domestic service program started in 1965, conceived by President John F. Kennedy and implemented by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the "War on Poverty." This program centers on ending poverty by addressing its root causes. Toward this end, VISTA empowers communities to engage in the planning, development, and implementation of local projects. The national service members who work at VISTA help to build the capacity of participating organizations by serving, strengthening, expanding, and increasing the reach of their programs and projects. The goal of VISTA is to create solutions and develop systems, relationships, and knowledge that can be transferred to the service organization and community-at-large to sustain them over the long-term.

AmeriCorps State and National, created in 1993, is the largest of the three AmeriCorps programs and was conceived by President George H.W. Bush and implemented by President Bill Clinton. AmeriCorps State and National programs engage AmeriCorps Members in providing direct service to address unmet community needs, expand existing programs and create new activities beyond what organizations are able to do without AmeriCorps. These national service members also help to recruit community volunteers to expand the reach and effectiveness of the organization where they serve.

AmeriCorps has continually received bipartisan support since its inception and is recognized as an integral part of empowering national service and moving the needle in the fight against poverty.

New Americans VISTA Program

In late 2015, CCUSA was awarded 30 VISTAs and 1 VISTA Leader for three years as a part of the New Americans VISTA Program. These 30 VISTAs serve at 21 different refugee resettlement and legal immigration programs at Catholic Charities agencies across the country and are supported by a VISTA Leader serving at CCUSA.

As AmeriCorps VISTAs, these national service members help build the capacity of their organization but do not provide direct service to clients. New Americans VISTAs are being utilized for a wide variety of projects at Catholic Charities organizations, including writing grants, coordinating volunteers, creating training manuals, forming community and organizational partnerships, conducting community education, and creating new sustainable programs.

The New Americans VISTAs have different assignments according to the needs of the local agencies, but all are working to transform communities to welcome the stranger and improve the integration and financial self-sufficiency of immigrants and refugees.

From September 2015 to December 2016, the New Americans VISTA Program helped to harness the power of community members, recruiting 1,835 volunteers and managing an additional 1,565 volunteers. During this same time period, these volunteers performed 19,347 service hours in refugee or legal immigration programs. In addition, the VISTAs have leveraged \$209,475 through fundraising and an additional \$138,282 worth of in-kind resources. The VISTAs' efforts resulted in 45,489 low income new Americans receiving integration services, with 1,702 families reporting improved financial self-sufficiency as a result. More than 120 communities were assisted by our New Americans VISTAs, with more than 90 reported to be more welcoming.

Refugee Resettlement AmeriCorps Program

In 2016 CCUSA was awarded a three-year grant to provide 24 AmeriCorps Members for direct services in refugee resettlement programs. These AmeriCorps Members serve at 15 different Catholic Charities agencies across the country.



Using the average salary of a resettlement case manager as a point of reference, CCUSA estimates that it would cost Catholic Charities agencies about \$1.5 million to replace AmeriCorps volunteers with full-time staff.

As direct service AmeriCorps Members, these volunteers work one-on-one with refugees, asylees, and trafficking victims, providing specialized trauma-informed case management, interpretation services, employment and housing assistance, and legal services. With different populations and needs, each participating agency creates the AmeriCorps Member's service description, with a program-wide goal of increasing the financial literacy of this vulnerable population, so as to increase long-term self-sufficiency.

In the first five months of the project, the AmeriCorps Members have served 1,818 refugees – almost four percent of all refugees that will be admitted in FY2016. They have generated 143 episodic volunteers and 78 on-going volunteers. They also have provided 126 refugees with financial literacy courses, which focused on navigating the United States' financial systems.

Life as an AmeriCorps

CCUSA's VISTAs and AmeriCorps Members are passionate and enthusiastic adults that are making a year-long, full-time commitment to serve immigrants and refugees. Our national service members range in age and experience: Some have advanced degrees and are fluent in multiple languages, while others are recent high school graduates with a drive to give back to their community and make an impact.

During their year of service, AmeriCorps Members are required to live on an allowance at the level of the poverty line, which helps them to understand the trials that their clients face every day. Upon completion of their commitment, members receive an education

award, linked to the monetary value of a Pell Grant, which can be used for student loans or future education.

As they serve, AmeriCorps Members are able to grow in their skills and gain tremendous experience. Speaking about her service, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden AmeriCorps VISTA Samantha Astely said, "AmeriCorps has been a life changing experience! Not only did my service allow me to experience and learn from others of different faiths and cultures, it showed me how generous people can be. This experience has shaped a new way of thinking about refugees, about culture, and about kindness. If there is someone in need there will be someone with an outstretched hand to help them."

Samantha has grown the size of the volunteer program at Catholic Charities Camden sevenfold, helping to organize and coordinate the increased amount of donations and community groups interested in serving refugees.

Why would a person want to spend a year in national service? One of the most powerful stories comes from Ti Hniang, an AmeriCorps Member at Catholic Charities Atlanta, the same agency that resettled her when she came to the United States. Ti said, "[Catholic Charities Atlanta] welcomed me like I am a part of their family and showed me that there was still hope when I was hopeless. When I heard that I could be an AmeriCorps volunteer with Catholic Charities here in Atlanta, I felt like it was now my turn to show other people from around the world the same love and hope that I received."

Ti has been a tremendous asset to Catholic Charities Atlanta, utilizing her Burmese language skills to develop a strong rapport between new refugee clients and the agency.

Value of AmeriCorps

Using the average salary of a resettlement case manager as a point of reference, CCUSA estimates that it would cost Catholic Charities agencies about \$1.5 million to replace AmeriCorps volunteers with full-time staff. With CNCS funds, CCUSA is able to offer a full-time equivalent at a minimal cost with high returns for the participating agencies across the country.

However, the benefit from volunteers to participating agencies goes beyond reducing costs. The volunteers also make strategic impacts at their organizations, helping to increase community involvement and improve client outcomes.

Speaking about her New Americans VISTA, Sandra Pittenger, Program Manager for the Refugee and Immigration Services at Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston, said: "The VISTA has had a significant impact at our program here at Catholic Charities Boston. Prior to the VISTA we had plenty of individuals wanting to help with refugee resettlement, but with no one managing the volunteers it was difficult to keep them involved. But once our VISTA came on board, she developed our volunteer program within one year and we grew from less than 10 active volunteers to almost 200! To have volunteers showing their support sends an incredible message to incoming refugees: 'Welcome to your new home, we support you.'"

Julie Ward, Director, Immigration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans, also spoke about the impact her Refugee Resettlement AmeriCorps Member, Janet Lopez, is having:

"Janet's enthusiasm and vision have allowed us to assess our employment services and adjust to implement a much more comprehensive job readiness service. With her help, our Refugee Services Program Job Readiness Courses are designed to teach and encourage clients to become self-sufficient. Since Janet's start in October of 2016, our employable clients have shown a marked increase in confidence and job knowledge as a result of their new skills. Janet's compassion and high expectations, as well as her vast employment and career services knowledge, have really enhanced our clients' desire to succeed and become quickly independent. She truly embodies her title as a Success Coach and we're lucky to have her on our team."

Looking to the Future

In early 2017, CCUSA applied to CNCS for continued funding for the New Americans VISTA Program, an expansion of the Refugee Resettlement Program, and a new Legal Immigration Program. These national service programs are an integral way CCUSA hopes to continue to increase the organizational capacity of our immigration and refugee ministry over the next five years, in accordance with our strategic priority. ■

▶ THE PROCESS OF RESETTLING A REFUGEE

By Bill Canny, Executive Director, Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB



Over the last couple of years a spotlight has been pointed at the growing refugee crisis encapsulating the world. Right now, more than 65 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes around the world. This marks the highest number of displaced persons at any point since the Second World War. Some come from nations suffering from political instability, others hail from regions that have been subject to natural disasters, and there are some that are from countries currently involved in civil wars. Among displaced people, more than 21 million are refugees, as determined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). All refugees are fleeing persecution based on religion or on nationality, race, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Refugees often flee to neighboring countries seeking safety. Many wait in those countries and either settle there or return home when it is safe. A very small number seek refugee resettlement in a third country. Of the more than 21 million refugees, roughly only about

one percent will be resettled. The United States is the largest resettlement country. While there are differences among the nationalities and religions of refugees being resettled in the United States, there is something that links all the refugees together: the rigorous application and vetting process that determines whether they can gain entry into the United States.

Throughout the most recent election cycle and into President Trump's first couple of months in office, there have been calls for better screening of individuals who are entering the United States through the visa program as well as for those who are fleeing their native countries as refugees. As the various departments of the government look to enhance the security in the admission process, we will take you through the lengthy process that is currently in place for refugees.

There are 37 countries around the world that take part in the resettlement process in conjunction with UNHCR. For those who have

been identified as a refugee by UNHCR, and it has been determined that they will apply for resettlement in the United States, they start a lengthy screening process to make sure that they are legitimate refugees and are not a danger to the community.

The initial referral process by UNHCR effectively starts the vetting process, a process that will include several background checks by different U.S. governmental agencies, as well as interviews and testing of biometric data to confirm the person's identity, their qualifications to be a refugee, and to make sure they are not a threat. For Syrian refugees, after they have been vetted by UNHCR they are "pre-vetted" by the Department of Homeland Security before they are passed on to the refugee support center.

Here is a look at how refugees are screened before coming to the United States: In the first step of the process, UNHCR will collect all biodata (name, address, date of birth and more) of those seeking refuge in another country. During this process, biometrics such as iris scans are also taken, and the person seeking refuge goes through an initial interview to confirm their claim to refugee status and confirm their need for resettlement. At this point, only strong candidates for resettlement proceed. Next, the refugee's case is sent to a Resettlement Support Center (RSC) which is run by the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). At this point, PRM creates a file for the applicant based on the information received from UNHCR and starts to conduct security checks.

Assuming that these security checks have come back clear, the U.S. Government starts background checks on those seeking refuge with the use of the following security agencies: Department of Homeland Security (DHS), FBI, State Department, and National Counterterrorism Center/Intelligence Community. They are looking for any information that would prove that the individual is a security risk, has connections to those who may have terrorist ties or if they have any criminal violations or outstanding warrants. This process will repeat anytime new information is found on the individual, like using an alias or if a different phone number or address has been used.

When a refugee has passed the screenings from DHS, the FBI and others, DHS and United States Citizenship and Immigration

Services (USCIS) officers conduct additional interviews and collect fingerprints. The officers at USCIS are specifically trained to conduct these interviews and to determine a person's credibility. They are looking for inconsistencies in the stories or backgrounds.

Assuming that the applicant has passed all security clearances to this point, the applicant's fingerprints are taken by government employees and screened against the FBI biometric database, the DHS biometric database and the U.S. Department of Defense biometric database. These databases will provide information for people on watch-lists and will provide information on whether the applicant has had previous encounters with immigration officials. If there are any security concerns about the applicant, the process will stop and they will not be admitted. If their checks come back clean, they will continue their progress in the system.

Next, the refugees will have to undergo a medical check. They will be checked to see if there are any communicable diseases that need to be treated, and if so, they would be treated. If there are medical issues that would cause harm to others or create unsafe situations, the applicant would be done at this stage of the process.

Refugees who have made it to this point are enrolled in cultural orientation classes. As they complete their orientation classes, different factors are taken into consideration regarding where different refugees should be placed. One of those factors is whether or not they have family already living in the United States. If so, they may be placed in close proximity to their family. Roughly 70 percent of refugees who are resettled in the United States are located because they have family in that area. Another factor is health. For someone who may have asthma or another health concern that would be exacerbated by a certain area of the country, the agencies try their best to avoid placing the refugee in a climate that would be harmful to their medical condition. The nine U.S.-based nongovernmental agencies, including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services, assist the Department of State with this placement process.

Throughout the first seven steps of the screening process, refugees are routinely having their backgrounds checked against watch-lists and terrorist databases to ensure that no new information has been found. If information was found that raised concerns, the reset-

Refugees often flee to neighboring countries seeking safety. Many wait in those countries and either settle there or return home when it is safe. – Bill Canny



tlement process would be put on hold while an investigation took place. For refugees coming from certain nations that have been identified by the U.S. Government as having enhanced ties to terrorist organizations, refugees can be subject to enhanced screenings by the Department of Homeland Security.

At this point the International Organization for Migration (IOM) books travel for refugees. The money that IOM spends on the travel will be paid back after the refugee arrives in the United States. The refugee undergoes another screening at this point by U.S. Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center and the Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight Program. Assuming both checks come back clean, then the refugee will board a plane for the United States. Should something be found during these checks that would potentially make the refugee not suitable for resettlement in the United States, they are disqualified from the program. Assuming that all the checks from all these agencies come back clear, the refugee arrives in the United States. Within the first year that they are in the U.S. they are required to apply for a green card which will trigger additional security checks and procedures for the government.

As they arrive at the airport, a refugee is either met by a family member (assuming they have a family-tie case) and/or a member

of the non-governmental organization that has been helping place them around the country. Those organizations then work in partnership with the Department of State to help the individuals get settled into their new communities during the period of their initial arrival. As a part of the Refugee Act of 1980, Congress established the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR) to provide refugees with resettlement assistance beyond the initial admission and placement services provided by the U.S. Department of State. This includes employment training, English language training, medical assistance, and cash assistance to promote economic self-sufficiency, as well as job placement. ORR's goal is to help refugees transition into the U.S. by providing benefits and assistance to become integrated members of society as soon as possible.

It is important to remember that hard working refugees are often skilled laborers or professionals who may have years of experience in certain fields. For those who were doctors or lawyers in their native country and wanted to pursue that profession here in the United States, it might involve years of schooling and degrees to be properly accredited to do their work. Due to the inability to go to school right away, cultural differences, not knowing the language or having the right skill set, many refugees take lower-income jobs such as manufacturing jobs or working at hotels. Some of the ORR

programs help refugees navigate bureaucracies so that they can be recertified and contribute their full gifts to their families and their new communities.

The government's emphasis on early economic self-sufficiency can be seen in ORR's "Voluntary Agency Matching-Grant Program." Those eligible to take part in a Match Grant are employable individuals and family units which include at least one able wage earner, aged 18-64, willing to forego public cash assistance for at least six months after their arrival (for refugees) or date of status (for asylees, entrants, Special Immigrants, and Victims of Trafficking), a commitment they must make within 31 days of their arrival or status. Match Grant program participants have up to 180 days – during which they receive intensive employment services and financial support – to become self-sufficient through employment, meaning their total earned household income enables them to support themselves without reliance on Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) or other public cash. USCCB/Migration and Refugee Services receives \$2,200 in federal funding for each client enrolled in the program, \$2,000 of which is passed through to the diocesan resettlement program serving the client(s), usually a Catholic Charities agency, where it is then matched with a 50 percent agency contribution for each dollar of federal funds spent. Mandatory Match Grant services provided to all clients for at least 120 days include case management, employment services, and maintenance assistance which comprises

housing (as needed), transportation, food, and a minimum cash allowance. USCCB/MRS Match Grant program outcomes have improved steadily in recent years, with about 75 percent of all clients self-sufficient at Day 180.

On Monday, March 6, the Trump administration released a new executive order that seeks to put a four-month pause on the refugee resettlement program. During this period, the administration will look at new ways to make sure that those entering the United States are thoroughly vetted. At the moment, the administration has yet to say how the new vetting process will differ from the one that was currently in place during the time of the Obama administration.

In addition to pausing the program, the executive order lowered the number of refugees the U.S. will accept during this fiscal year from 110,000 to 50,000. This would leave an estimated 60,000 individuals who had already been conditionally approved by DHS, and have valid claims of persecution, vulnerable in their native countries or in refugee camps. We, like everyone else, want a strong vetting process that will keep Americans safe. However, a pause to this current system has negative consequences for those who are left in limbo. We would never oppose positive changes to the vetting system. However, we feel that the resettlement program can continue while the government seeks to improve the current system. ■



COLLABORATION KEY TO NAVIGATING THE ‘NEW NORMAL’ OF IMMIGRATION LAW

By Patricia Zapor, Communications Director, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

CLINIC will continue to collaborate with CCUSA to offer more trainings and workshops to bolster immigration services.

The extent of just how much the world was about to change for the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., known as CLINIC, was almost too much to contemplate on the morning of November 9, 2016, the day after the presidential election.

Jeanne Atkinson, executive director of CLINIC, the nation’s largest network of non-profit immigration service agencies, gathered her senior staff before noon for a first dive into framing a response to what she came to call “the new normal.” Preparations began for how immigration legal service providers would have to adapt to the election of a president who had vowed to dramatically ramp up deportations, block immigration from some countries, slash the number of refugees admitted, build a wall across the length of the Mexican border and end Obama administration programs which protected some people from deportation and allowed them to work legally.

Since 1988, CLINIC has been the source of training and other types of institutional support to (now 300) mostly small nonprofits that offer free or low-cost immigration legal services. The network consists of Catholic diocesan social service agencies, many a part of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), as well as other faith-based entities and secular community organizations.

CLINIC was founded by the U.S. Catholic Conference (as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, or USCCB, was known then) to support the rapidly growing network of faith-based nonprofit immigration services organizations. It operates as an independent 501(c)(3) with member organizations in 47 states and the District of Columbia.

CLINIC’s primary work is to teach the staff of those agencies about immigration law, both the basics and the ever-changing details. A significant part of that instruction

Immigrants who have legal counsel are five times more likely to succeed in immigration court than those without representation...

effort is to train non-attorneys for accreditation to represent clients in immigration matters, under a Department of Justice program that enables nonprofits to bolster their legal service staffs without the expense of relying only on attorneys.

Among CLINIC's other programs are: an office to support network members in building their capacity; the Religious Immigration Services, which provides legal representation to immigrant clergy, sisters and lay workers; an office to coordinate pro bono appeals; a support team that works with parishes and community groups; an immigrant integration project and a team doing advocacy on federal, state and local policy.

On November 9, Atkinson and her staff began to project what CLINIC's network would need in the days, months and years ahead.

Now, months into the new administration, with several immigration-related executive orders issued and a budget proposal that reflects many of President Donald Trump's campaign promises on immigration, the "new normal" continues at a nonstop pace. With a combination of reactions to government actions and anticipatory efforts to prepare people for what might be ahead, CLINIC staff have been conducting webinars, analyzing administrative actions (and the related court rulings) and producing a slew of materials to help CLINIC affiliates and the public understand what's happening. Among them are a variety of public resources, advisories for legal service providers, presentations and webinars, including several collaborations with CCUSA. New resources include a we-

binar series on supporting the immigrant community, as well as know-your-rights materials for the general public, some available in Spanish, English, Chinese and Amharic.

Webinars for CCUSA and other steps to assist Catholic Charities agencies jelled after a February 1 press conference in Washington D.C. There, Atkinson, Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD, president and CEO of CCUSA, and representatives of the Center for Migration Studies, Catholic Relief Services, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and Migration and Refugee Services of USCCB talked about the Trump administration's plans and their effects on the Catholic agencies and the people whom they serve. Sister Donna noted that CCUSA member agencies that resettle refugees would need to lay off as many as 600 employees due to the order to suspend refugee resettlement for 120 days and to reduce the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. this fiscal year.

Sister Donna observed that the majority of the 110,000 refugees originally scheduled to be resettled in the U.S. would have gone through Catholic Charities agencies. The executive order cut the refugee admissions number to 50,000. "It's a frightening time," she said. "This is not only having an impact on very frightened people seeking to come to our country, but also the people serving them and trying to get them integrated in our communities."

Catholic agencies may not need as many refugee resettlement staffers under the "new normal," but demand for legal services workers is mushrooming.

A Welcoming America for All: CLINIC's Convening 2017

CLINIC's annual Convening is the premier training event for those seeking to increase their knowledge of immigration law and successful program management techniques and to help your community embrace immigrant integration. Join us May 24-26, 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia, as we gather with fellow advocates and service providers to share strategies, enhance expertise and provide hope.

At the Convening on Wednesday, May 24, CCUSA will host a meeting of the Immigrant & Refugee National Impact Community of Practice. Open to staff and volunteers working at Catholic Charities agencies, the Community of Practice gathers to explore how to maximize impact by focusing individual efforts around common goals. CCUSA needs your input to learn how to marshal national resources to achieve the greatest good for those who need us most.

CCUSA's Partners in Excellence

CCUSA's Partners in Excellence meetings in Oklahoma City in May and Indianapolis in June will feature CLINIC staffers presenting workshops (See inside back cover for CCUSA "Upcoming Training and Events").



In his executive orders on immigration enforcement, President Trump announced plans to hire 10,000 more Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and 5,000 more Border Patrol agents. Along with the administration's broadened guidelines for which immigrants are to be targeted for deportation, CLINIC's affiliates have seen a surge in the number of frightened immigrants looking for legal representation.

New demand for help began right after the election. On the morning of November 9, the staff of Immigration & Legal Services of Catholic Charities of Dallas arrived at the office to find a line of people already waiting to try to get help with their legal status. In the months since, thousands of immigrants have come to events around the country hosted by CLINIC affiliates to be screened for possible legal protection from deportation.

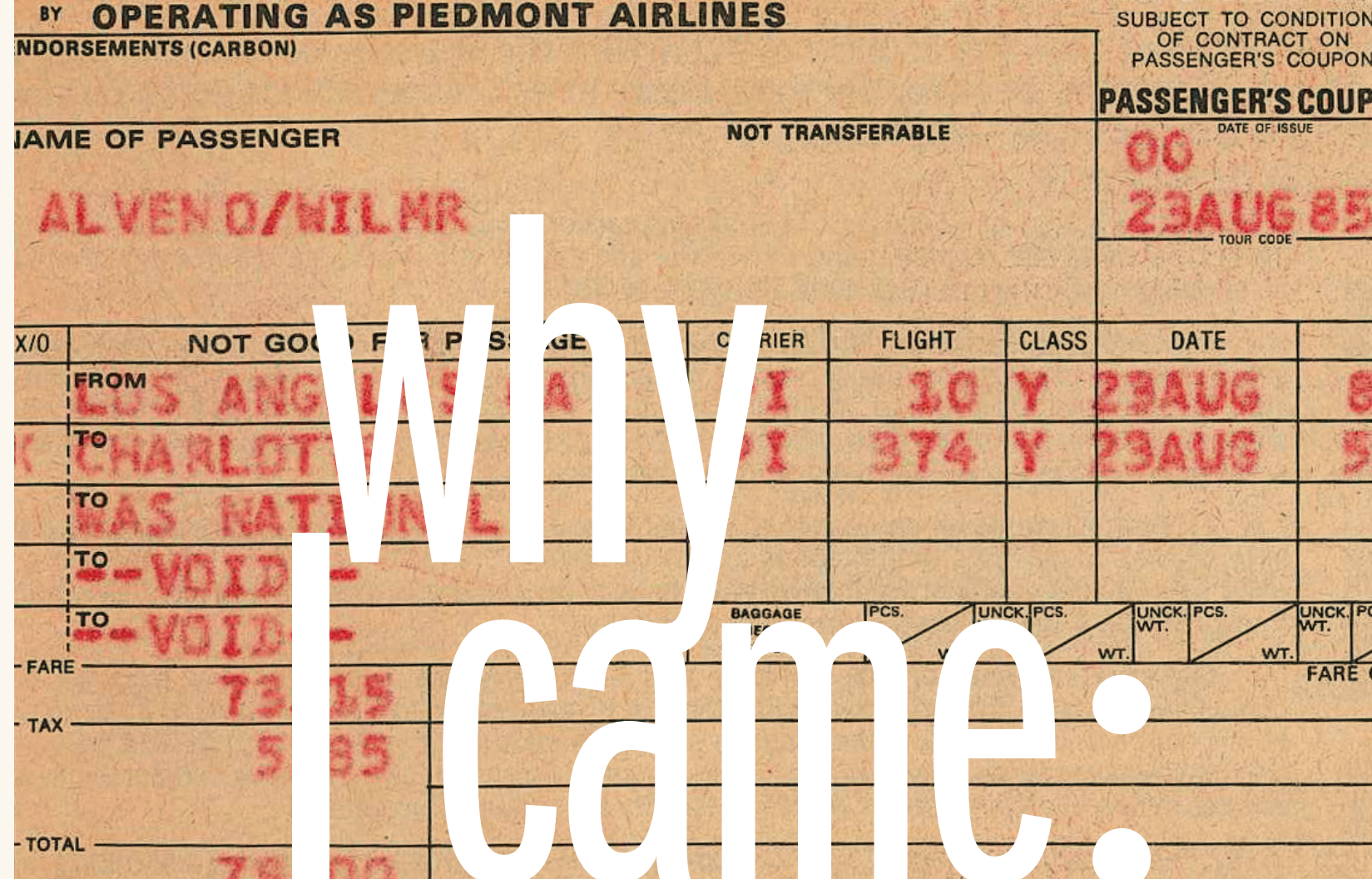
CLINIC's Capacity Building staff began to address the problem Sister Donna raised about refugee resettlement workers with suggestions for how to adapt that human capacity to the need for immigration-related services. A webinar for CCUSA in February, "Engaging Resettlement Staff in Alternative Programming Beyond Executive Orders," broached the possibility of repurposing refugee resettlement staff into other types of immigration work.

CLINIC will continue to collaborate with CCUSA to offer more trainings and workshops to bolster immigration services.

There is good reason to believe that the hope for legal status on the part of many – perhaps millions – of undocumented immigrants is more than just dreams.

In 2012, President Obama used executive orders to launch Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, known as DACA. It offered to certain young people who came to the United States as minors the chance to get what is known as deferred deportation in return for them undergoing a background check, registering with the federal government and paying a fee. The program provides DACA recipients with a Social Security number and a work permit. The status also enables participants to get drivers' licenses and to obtain other benefits such as in-state tuition. The status is temporary and could be revoked by the Trump administration.

A 2014 study by the Center for Migration Studies, CLINIC, the National Immigrant Justice Center and political scientist Tom Wong of the University of California at San Diego found that 14 percent of DACA applicants were actually eligible for a more permanent legal status.



The most common “remedies,” as they are known in the legal world, were family-based petitions for legal permanent residency; a category of visas for victims of crimes; and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, which protects minors who have been abused, abandoned or neglected.

CLINIC affiliates in seven states are currently gathering data from screening workshops for a new analysis of whether the results of the DACA applicant study apply to the overall population of people without legal status. Results are expected this spring.

If that 14 percent figure applies to the entire population without legal status, it would mean that 1.5 million people out of the estimated 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. could have a path to legal protection from deportation. Early data from the screenings suggest the overall percentage could be even higher. Some surprises have also included finding a few immigrants who didn’t realize they are actually U.S. citizens.

Therein lies the problem, and the opportunity, for CLINIC and Catholic Charities agencies to deepen their partnership.

Under federal law, being in the United States without permission is not a crime, but a civil violation – legally akin to a speeding ticket. That means that poor people who are accused of most immigration violations may not rely on the government to provide an attorney for them, as is the case in criminal court. Those charged with immigration violations are entitled to legal representation, but at their own expense.

In immigration court, however, unlike in traffic court, the consequence for being found guilty is far more life-changing than points against one’s driver’s license – viz., deportation. For families in which some members are undocumented, some have legal status or some are U.S. citizens, the family unit can be broken apart, often with deported members being sent back to countries they fled because of great danger.

Immigrants who have legal counsel are five times more likely to succeed in immigration court than those without representation, found a 2016 study by the American Immigration Council. Yet only 37 percent of all immigrants had legal counsel, and even fewer for those who were in detention at the time of their court proceedings.

CLINIC’s new Defending Vulnerable Populations Project is designed to make a dent in the shortage of trained legal representatives. Its primary objective is to increase the number of attorneys and representatives who are fully accredited to represent people in immigration court.

Michelle Mendez, manager of the Vulnerable Populations Project, explained its basis: “It is the responsibility of the legal community to protect immigrants living in the United States who do not have a voice. They are an integral part of our families, communities, schools and universities, places of worship, workforce, food supply chain, and the very identity of this nation. We are committed to defending their rights because this is what justice and fairness dictates and because, if their rights are safe, all of our rights are safe.” ■

A CCUSA COLLEAGUE’S STORY OF SETTLING IN THE UNITED STATES

By David Werning, Managing Editor

On the last day of March in 1980, as the sun disappeared slowly over San Salvador and the curfew that had been established by the junta a year earlier took effect once again, residents in the city prepared for another long night without electricity or running water. Some families listened to battery-powered radios that offered a diversion from the gunfire and explosions that pierced the air outside. Parents and children huddled together within the concrete foundations of their homes for fear of stray bullets that ripped through the wooden walls of the upper floors. The unrest in El Salvador was increasing.

Just a week earlier on March 24, in the same city, Archbishop Oscar Romero had been assassinated as he celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital. The day before he

had denounced powerfully the military-government’s death squads, and he told soldiers to obey God rather than the officers who gave orders to shoot civilians. Since the government was supported by the rich landowners of El Salvador, it sought to snuff out the guerrilla groups that were calling for reform in the social and economic arenas (these groups would eventually coalesce into the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, or FMLN). Anyone perceived to give aid and comfort to the guerrillas was also eliminated. Archbishop Romero was caught in the middle, trying to protect the ordinary people who also felt pressed in by both sides of the conflict.

The funeral for Archbishop Romero was held on March 30, and, tragically, government troops began shooting at the large crowd of mourners who had gathered outside the Metropolitan Cathedral, causing the deaths of at least 30 people (75,000 lives would be

lost by war's end in 1992). Less than a mile away, at the house that sat at 1434 Avenida Espana, Wil Alveno (who currently works as the Database Manager for CCUSA) had just welcomed back his girlfriend, Marina, who had left the funeral early because she was overcome with a foreboding sense of fear. Her premonition was confirmed as they heard the booming sound of bombs and the uproar of the crowd, knowing immediately where the tumult was coming from. They went quickly to the roof of the house and saw the billowing smoke clouds rising from the direction of the cathedral. They had no idea that the very next day Wil's family would be touched by the growing violence as well.

San Salvador was not always like this. Wil, who was born in 1965, remembers the first decade of his childhood as mostly peaceful. When he was seven, Wil would play soccer with his siblings in the streets or sit in the park that was catty-corner from their home. Wil's father worked as a salesman for an English mimeograph company, and his mother ran a cafeteria from the ground floor of their house. Since Wil was born an Albino, he could not be outside for long periods and, therefore, would often sit at the door of the cafeteria selling candy to customers from a basket his mother had prepared. Some of the customers worked across the Avenida Espana at the office of the Democratic Nationalist Union party (UDN). Wil remem-

bers that, listening to these gentlemen talk, "I always heard information about what was going on."

By 1972, however, no one in San Salvador, even children, needed anyone to point out the changes taking place. "You would go to school and then, coming home, you would see people in the streets," Wil recalls. "People having a meeting, people marching, going downtown. And it never ended good: people were rowdy, some were armed, and sometimes it ended in violence." In February of 1972, the people in the streets protested what they thought was a rigged election by the army, which denied Jose Duarte the presidency (Duarte was exiled to Guatemala, but he escaped to Venezuela for seven years before returning to El Salvador).

Still, most of the time, Wil's days were filled with school and family life. The "struggle," as Wil calls it, remained in the realm of adults and would present itself to him only indirectly: "My mother used to drag me to the common market, and since I was an Albino, everyone used to give me treats. It was great being pampered, but I also heard the women talking politics." Wil later learned that those who frequented the market, along with the workers there, were perceived by the government as sympathizers or participants in the brewing conflict.

Early in 1979, when Wil was 13, the neighborhood around his home became noticeably more active in meetings and violence. "I was aware of the riots, workers complaining, everything was brewing," Wil says. "At night you would hear the news that someone was kidnapped. Or a bank might be bombed, but we thought they were trying to get the money."

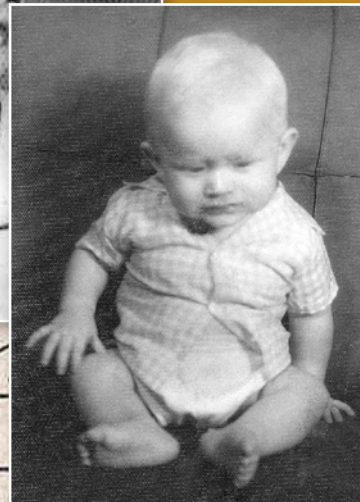
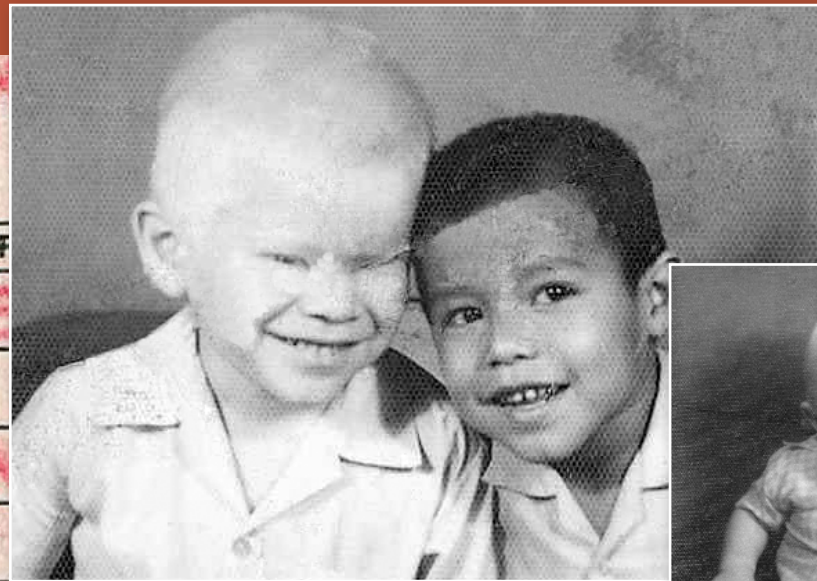
The actual coup d'état that deposed the sitting president, Carlos Romero (no relation to the archbishop), and that installed a civil-military junta, took place on October 15, 1979. The coup marked the beginning of the civil war which eventually, after several changes in national leadership, settled into a conflict between the FMLN and the Salvadoran army (including its aligned security forces), a conflict that would last 12 years. In the opening months of the war, the assassination of Archbishop Romero was, perhaps, the most widely-known murder, but on the night of March 31, one day after the archbishop's funeral, Wil's family became involved in the most tragic way.

Wil's older brother, Rene, had joined a student organization attached to one of the guerrilla groups that made up FMLN. Although Wil's family did not know until weeks later, Rene was kidnapped

and executed by a para-military group on March 31. When the family did find out, Wil's step-mother and sister left immediately for the United States. Wil, however, was not thinking of leaving at that moment. Despite the tragedy of his brother's death and the escalating violence, he wanted to stay in order to finish high school and, hopefully, to marry his girlfriend Marina after graduation.

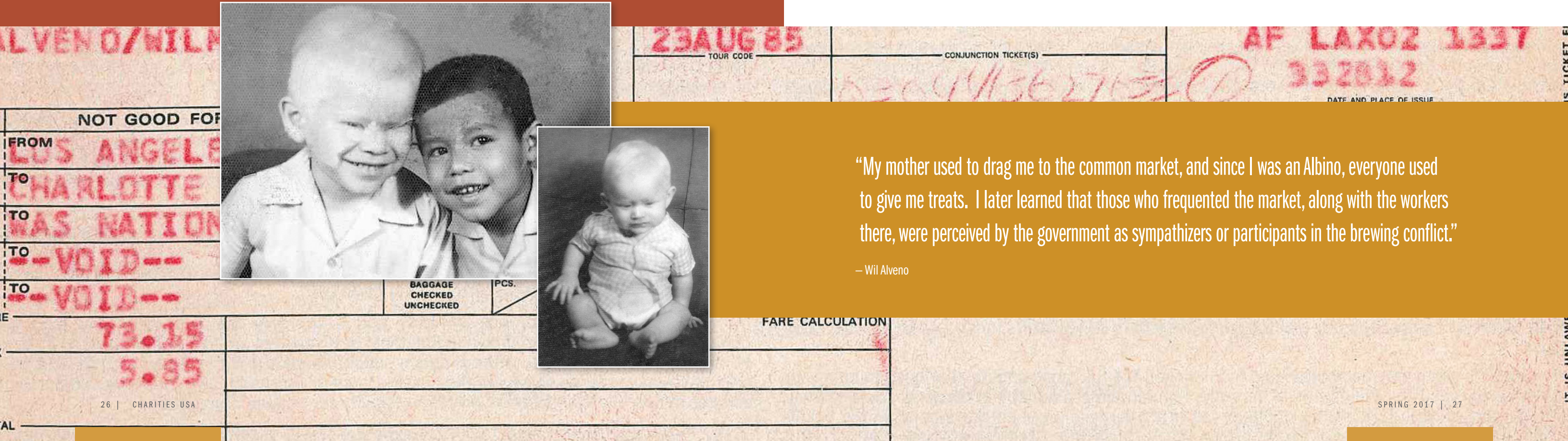
Wil's plans progressed well, considering the circumstances. He finished high school early, learned English, and got a job at a travel agency that had him working at the airport just outside of San Salvador. The job was welcome for two reasons: it allowed Wil to be as close to airplanes – his passion – as a legally-blind person could be, and it was one of the most heavily-guarded sites in San Salvador, which meant he was unlikely to get shot at work. Getting to and from work, however, was another matter: "You could get on a bus to go to your job, and that will be the last time you're on a bus. Fights break out in the middle of the street, and you get killed. The curfew is still on. And at night all you hear is the shooting."

As the civil war continued to rage, the ordinary person on the street was getting pulled in to the conflict one way or another. "You were under pressure to join something," Wil says. "Regular people didn't



"My mother used to drag me to the common market, and since I was an Albino, everyone used to give me treats. I later learned that those who frequented the market, along with the workers there, were perceived by the government as sympathizers or participants in the brewing conflict."

— Wil Alveno



want to fight, but there were no rules anymore. Everybody started killing everybody. If I had a relative in the military, I was a target. If I had a distant relative involved in the communist party or the guerrilla movement, I was involved. If you lived in a neighborhood, if you went to a church, you were labelled with whatever was happening there.”

By 1985, the polarization and violence had gotten so extreme that Wil began thinking he had no choice but to leave El Salvador. The change in mindset was caused not so much by preserving his own life, but by protecting the ones he loved: he and Marina had gotten married and were expecting a child. “Really, I was thinking about moving anywhere,” Wil recalls. “But I decided to leave for the United States.”

Wil’s journey to the United States was similar in outline to the many well-known stories of Central American immigrants dramatized in movies like “El Norte” and novels like *Odyssey to the North* (by Mario Bencastro). The moment of decision, which is driven by fear and a longing for safety, is followed by a dangerous and stressful passage through unknown territories. Along the way, the travelers encounter people ready to exploit them for money or worse. The immigrants often travel by foot for much of the journey, foregoing the

normal routines of daily life, such as regular meals and access to restrooms. Wil experienced all of this, and he had the added anxiety of protecting his wife – who was pregnant – and a young nephew who was traveling with them.

All three made it to the United States on August 20, 1985, and they moved quickly to Los Angeles where they were to meet a friend of Wil’s sister. The friend, Lupe, took the very tired travelers to her home, fed them, and allowed them to shower, something they had not done in days. Lupe also took them shopping for new clothes. Wil says that he will never forget the movie he watched that first night in the U.S. at Lupe’s house: “It was the ‘Muppets Take Manhattan,’ and it was very interesting because it’s a movie about leaving your home and going somewhere else you don’t know. It was very representative of what was happening to us.”

The first several years in the United States were a mix of joys and trials for Wil and Marina. Top on the list of joys was the birth of their daughter Gloria. Second to the top was the assistance they received from various organizations and churches open to helping immigrants in the 1980s. Through the compassion of friends and strangers, Wil and Marina were able to start building a life in the

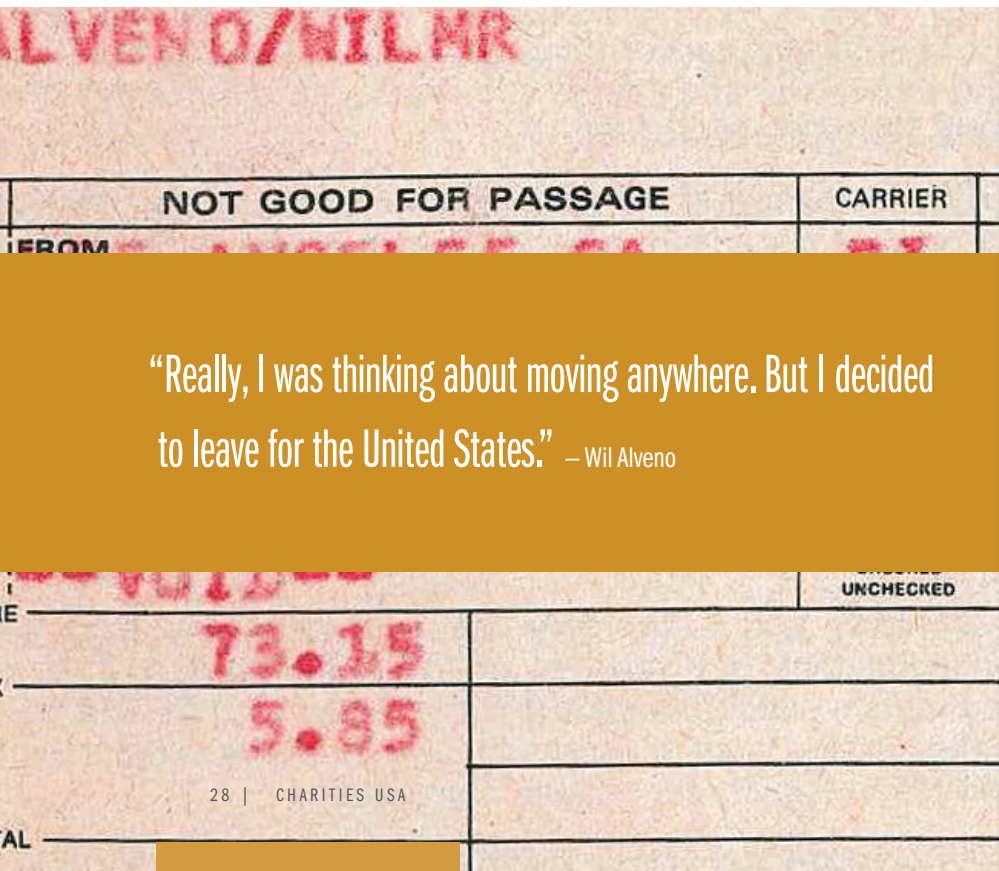
U.S. At first they lived with Wil’s sister until they were able to find an apartment for themselves. They went to work immediately: Wil cleaned office buildings at night and Marina assisted the beauticians at a salon during the day. Being self-sufficient and paying their own way was important to Wil. “I never wanted free things,” Wil says. “I just wanted a chance.”

Although Will counts coming to the United States as “the biggest blessing of his life,” he also suffered many trials as he made the effort to assimilate. “I thought that by me knowing English it was going to be really easy here, but I was wrong.” Sadly, for as many people who helped Wil and Marina, there seemed to be an equal number who treated them poorly and even threatened at times to call INS on them. “I didn’t understand,” Wil says. “We weren’t stealing anyone’s jobs. No one wanted to do what we were doing. We were working and trying to feed our families. But what we heard was, ‘you should just go back and die in your own country.’ That’s basically what they were saying.”

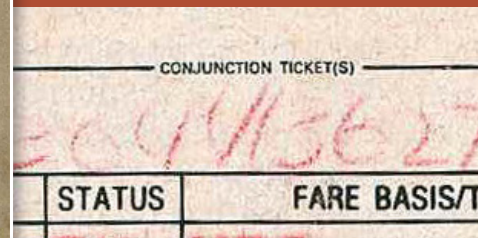
Nevertheless, Wil, through hard work and determination, was able to graduate from cleaning offices to building a career with Pan American World Airways, where he gained all the technical skills

and knowledge necessary to become a software manager. Wil has been blessed, and he has contributed positively to the communities and workplaces of which he has been a part. “I can be an example of what can happen when you give a person some help, when you don’t put barriers on people, when you give them that opportunity,” he says.

Wil is quick to add that he is not for open borders, and he acknowledges readily the responsibility newcomers have toward their host country. Yet he is worried that a nation like the United States, which has always been known for welcoming immigrants and refugees, will take back its outstretched hand and refuse to help people when they need it the most. Considering the enormous contributions that immigrants and refugees have made for the benefit of the U.S., such an attitude bodes well for no one. When asked what he would say to a person who thinks that he should never have come here, Wil says, “I hope that such a person is never in the position I was, where staying in their home meant facing possible death, not just for the person, but for their family too. I hope that person is never placed into a situation where they have to make that same decision.” ■



“Really, I was thinking about moving anywhere. But I decided to leave for the United States.” — Wil Alveno



DISASTER RESILIENCE FOR THE NEWCOMER WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

By Tasia Limonius, VISTA Leader for Disaster Resilience Program

Vulnerability is complex and multi-faceted. It is defined by Webster’s dictionary as being open to attack or damage, or easily harmed. There are multiple groups that are extremely vulnerable during a time of disaster, but among the most vulnerable are those with limited English proficiency (LEP). “Current disaster and emergency response planning does not adequately address the needs of limited English proficient communities. Without clear and proactive planning to strategically meet the needs of LEP communities, disaster scenarios will have adverse effects for LEP groups” (Public Health Reports, 2007).

According to the National Council of La Raza, “Latinos (like other groups) pay most attention to messages that come from trusted sources. Community leaders, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and family members are typically very credible, as are some Hispanic media outlets and personalities” (NCLR, 2011). Utilizing an opportunity afforded by an AmeriCorps program, Catholic Charities agencies are leveraging their role as a trusted authority to disseminate preparedness-messaging and engage LEP communities to build the tools needed to become disaster resilient. It is the particular

needs of immigrants with LEP that drove the unique design of the Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) Disaster Resilience AmeriCorps VISTA program.

The AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program has 8,000 members serving at 1,100 projects nationwide to address the root causes of poverty. VISTA members serve in local communities while earning a modest living allowance that reflects the income level of the community in which they are serving.

Facilitated through CCUSA, the three-year “Disaster Resilience” program focuses on building capacity in communities at high risk for natural disasters, to provide effective disaster preparedness for populations with LEP. Currently, VISTA members implementing the program are located across the U.S. at six local Catholic Charities sites (Spokane, Wash.; Springfield, Mo.; Kansas City, Mo.; Atlantic City, N.J.; Fort Worth, Texas; and Houston, Texas). VISTA members analyze the English proficiency of designated communities, the community’s understanding of risk and hazards, and their access to trusted sources of emergency information. Once a VISTA obtains

There are multiple groups that are extremely vulnerable during a time of disaster, but among the most vulnerable are those with limited English proficiency. - Tasia Limonius



this information, they work on building partnerships and relationships with local emergency management, key community partners, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and local persons with influence from both the community at-large and within the LEP population. The result of these new found relationships is the formation of an advisory committee. The committee – comprised of leaders in the LEP community, local schools, faith-based organizations, COAD/VOAD members, and others – is responsible for validating and carrying out effective community engagement in disaster preparedness.

VISTA members are making tremendous progress with creating partnerships and building relationships within their placement communities. An example of the progress being made is from the VISTA member serving with Catholic Charities Kansas City-St. Joseph, Julia Pedrosa.

“Gaining the trust of the limited-English speaking community and raising awareness of disaster preparedness are definitely the most

challenging parts of my work,” Julia said. “After countless meetings with organizations, community groups, parishes and schools to talk about the AmeriCorps VISTA Disaster Resiliency program, I finally heard the sentence: ‘You are one of us now.’ Being embraced by the community and knowing that I have their support to help immigrants and refugees get ready for disasters is what motivates me to keep on working. The way local leaders of Hispanic groups and refugee organizations have embraced this project has given me confidence that we can – and we will – have a more resilient Kansas City.”

VISTAs are beginning to make monumental strides creating fundamental relationships toward leveraging a system of trust which will provide the opportunity to share life-changing information to those with LEP. Through the dedication and hard work of VISTA members, the Disaster Resilience program is taking the first steps in creating a safer tomorrow for the most vulnerable in a disaster. ■

CCUSA Leadership Institute

Join us May 22-26 at the beautiful Bethany Center outside Tampa, Fla. for the 31st Annual Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute is intended for Catholic Charities emerging leaders, administrators, and program directors who seek to engage in a process of personal, professional, and spiritual growth. The Leadership Institute is designed to foster an understanding of the identity and mission of Catholic Charities, identify and develop leadership skills, and provide practical tools to guide ethical decision-making and professional action and engagement. For more information contact Scott Hurd at shurd@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.

O'Grady Institute for Catholic Identity

The O'Grady Institute for Catholic Identity is a dynamic program designed to help all employees of CCUSA member agencies grow in their understanding of the Catholic Identity of Catholic Charities. People of any faith tradition or no faith are welcome to participate. With guidance from CCUSA leaders and faculty from the University of Saint Thomas and the University of Freiburg (Germany), participants will explore and integrate the history of Catholic Charities, Catholic Social Doctrine, responses to human suffering, Church structure, and the CCUSA Code of Ethics. The O'Grady Institute will be held from June 26-29, 2017 at the University of Saint Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. For more information contact Fr. Mark Pranaitis at mpranaitis@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.

Tamar's Sisters Group Therapy Training

This workshop seeks to enhance coping skills and promote health and wellness among women who have lost a child as a result of a miscarriage, live birth/infant death or illness, as well as women who have experienced rape, incest or other forms of abuse. The workshop will prepare licensed clinicians from the Catholic Charities network for implementation within the group therapy practice setting in the local agency. Scholarships/stipends to supplement travel expenses and one overnight hotel stay are available. 1/5 day onsite training at CCUSA national office in Alexandria, Va. July 19-20, 2017. For more information, write to Ramona Ivy, CCUSA Chief Health Integration Officer at rivy@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.



CCUSA'S 2017 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

CCUSA is pleased to honor the amazing volunteers who are finalists for the 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award. They represent the more than 300,000 volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to the Catholic Charities ministry each year. By applying their skills to serve and help others, each of the finalists exemplifies the mission and spirit of Catholic Charities.



Elaine Brodeur. Agency: Vermont Catholic Charities. Program: St. Joseph Residential Care Home. Service: Described by Catholic Charities staff as “our resident saint,” Elaine has dedicated her retirement from a telephone company to helping the residents and staff at St. Joseph’s. Her service is all-encompassing: she drives residents to medical appointments, to the store for personal errands, and to the local ice cream parlor for an afternoon treat. When she is inside St. Joseph’s, Elaine helps wherever there is a need: preparing and serving meals, cleaning rooms and common areas, even painting the walls and ceilings. She takes special care of the chapel, making sure it is stocked with everything necessary for Mass, and she maintains the priests’ vestments as well.



Sally Cahur. Agency: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New York. Program: Catholic Charities Community Services, Refugee Resettlement Office. Service: As a retired journalist and public relations professional, Sally uses the writing and communications skills she developed throughout her career to help refugees. During her volunteer service of 11 years, she has helped more than 800 refugees from 19 countries with crafting resumes, preparing for job interviews, and learning English. Her focus is on resume preparation, and she comes to the office twice-a-week for one-on-one appointments with refugees. Most of the people Sally has helped have secured life-sustaining jobs.



Estelle Anderson. Agency: Catholic Charities of Buffalo. Program: Ladies of Charity. Service: Estelle began volunteering for Catholic Charities 30 years ago. At that time, she began working in the Layette program which provided baby clothes that donors would drop into a box. Over the years Estelle transformed the program so that now mothers in need are supplied with crib linens, clothing, and diapers for their children. She also helps to refresh the inventory by organizing numerous baby showers. Estelle has aided an estimated 10,000 families in Buffalo and its surrounding communities. She also started a bag program eight years ago, through which she and other volunteers provide senior citizens with homemade tote bags, which can be used to carry items from Catholic Charities food pantries.



Jerry Morris. Agency: Catholic Charities West Virginia. Program: Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center, Wheeling, WV. Service: Jerry is a retired mail deliverer and an honorably discharged veteran of the U.S. Air Force. In 1999, Jerry’s wife was critically ill and receiving the meal delivery service offered by the Neighborhood Center, which provides a daily warm meal to homebound individuals who cannot cook for themselves. When his wife died the same year, Jerry began volunteering for the same service. Over the last 18 years, Jerry has delivered more than 70,000 meals to homebound individuals. He also has used his knowledge as a mail deliverer to reorganize all of the meal routes, so that the delivery time of several routes have been shortened, saving volunteers time and fuel costs.



Brisa Jimenez Pintor. Agency: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of St. Louis. Program: St. Francis Community Services Youth Program. Service: Brisa has served as a volunteer at St. Francis Community Services in two capacities. She was a junior counselor during the Summer Camp program, during which she supervised the participants and engaged them in games and activities. She also serves as a tutor in the afterschool youth program where she provides one-on-one homework help to younger students. Brisa also became trained in individual tutoring for reading, which provides a needed service to struggling students. ■

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen Committed to Serving, Fighting Exploitation of Immigrants

In January 2017 media reports detailed human trafficking charges brought against two men after six unauthorized migrants were found living in an unheated shed behind a poultry slaughterhouse located in Perth Amboy. City inspectors shut the business down for good due to extensive code and health violations. The displaced immigrant workers were referred to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen, which provided them with food, legal support and transitional housing.

It was then Catholic Charities staff members learned that, for several years, the immigrant workers were forced to work in highly unsanitary and unhealthy conditions anywhere from 70-to-100 hours, six days a week for as little as \$2.90 per hour, and were threatened by the plant's owners with arrest and deportation when they complained about their working conditions. From their meager earnings, each worker is said to have paid \$40 per week to live in substandard housing onsite.

Only after getting permission from the workers did our Catholic Charities team notify federal law enforcement of possible human trafficking and involuntary servitude abuses. A subsequent federal investigation led to the November 29 arrest of the owner and manager of the business, and an attempt to recover the thousands of dollars in stolen wages these workers are owed. The outcome is yet unknown and, certainly, we pray that justice will be served. Thankfully, the affected workers are now living self-sufficiently, with renewed dignity and freedom from fear due to Catholic Charities' support.

While this unthinkable and unjust situation gained limited media attention, it is not the only, or worst, offense per-

petrated against countless vulnerable immigrants living, working and worshipping in our local communities. The very good news, however, is that amongst other institutions, the Catholic Church remains committed to accompanying immigrant and refugee individuals and families as they work for a better life right here in Central New Jersey.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen, provides legal, educational, and material support to thousands of immigrant families. We help immigrant workers vulnerable to exploitation exercise their rights in the workplace, reunite and keep together 1,000 families every year, and collaborate with local police to support immigrant victims of domestic violence. Over the last four years, we have accompanied hundreds of young people, who were brought to this country without authorization when they were children, in achieving a real future through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program; and we remain committed to supporting these young people who represent our future.

In November 2016, Pope Francis reminded us that, "In God's heart there are no enemies. God only has sons and daughters. We are the ones who raise walls, build barriers and label people." As the local Church in Metuchen, our encounter with situations like the one in Perth Amboy calls us to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and survivors of human trafficking. It reminds us that we must continue our efforts to serve, build community, and stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees in ways consistent with the laws of our nation, our national security as well as the core principles on which our country was founded.



'Chicago is Paradise':

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago Welcomes Refugee Family Escaping Religious Persecution

Zahid, his wife, Rabia, and their daughter, Sharon, are now a happy, vibrant family living in Chicago, thanks to Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Upon meeting them, you would never imagine that they recently had escaped dire circumstances in Pakistan.

They lived peacefully as Christians in Pakistan for their entire lives, but in 2001 they came under persecution. Zahid's father, a pastor at their local church, was murdered by terrorists. Then Zahid's brother was kidnapped. Zahid knew he and his family would be targeted next, so he made the decision to take his family into hiding and seek refugee status.

The first step was to connect with partner churches in Thailand, where the family would go under the pretense of a vacation and then hide. The churches provided Zahid and his wife and child with a room (about the size of a small office) that had no mattress, no air conditioning, no kitchen, and a small bathroom area. The churches also provided food and supplies, but it would take four years before their refugee status was approved. Their daughter, Sharon, passed three birthdays in that room.

"It was a very hard time, to see Sharon not able to be a child," Zahid said. "She would want for toys and things to play with. It was very hard to tell her no."

According to Zahid, Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program literally "saved his life." For families like Zahid's, the relationship with Catholic Charities begins the moment they arrive. They

are greeted at the airport, provided with a hot meal, and then taken to their new home, outfitted with the furniture and supplies they'll need, as well as financial assistance to get started. A case manager works with them for as long as two years to get them acclimated to life in the United States. Families receive everything from English classes, medical care, and employment resources. If there are children, staff work with getting them placed in the right school. Pregnancy services are also robust: In 2016 alone, the program welcomed 15 newborns.

While Zahid usually allows an interpreter to speak for him, he shares what he feels most passionately about with the English words he does know. When asked how he and his family like Chicago, he had a simple, profound answer: "Chicago is paradise," he said. "When you live without freedom, you learn how important for life it is."

Kate Kuhn, the case manager supervisor of the refugee program, smiles when she sees the families experience this kind of joy. "It's exciting to watch clients get that opportunity to start a new life," she said. "Less than one percent of refugees get a chance to come here and we get to work with that lucky few. We help them make the best of that opportunity."

Each year, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese Chicago resettles 200 refugees and supports them for as long as two years after their arrival. To learn more and support their refugee program, visit bit.ly/CCRefugee2017.

Catholic Social Services Named One of Five Nonprofits to Watch in 2017

At a special luncheon hosted March 20, 2017 by the Columbus Foundation, Catholic Social Services (Columbus, Ohio) was named as one of Five Nonprofits to Watch in 2017. The award, established in 2014, recognizes local nonprofits who are making exceptional efforts to strengthen and improve the community.

Catholic Social Services was specifically recognized for its innovative approach to serving the Columbus community and its commitment to Hispanic residents on the west side by expanding the size and reach of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Center.

Columbus Foundation CEO, Doug Kridler, stated, "Collectively these organizations are making great strides to provide critical services and programs to benefit central Ohio residents. We recognize their commitment to strengthening and improving our smart and open

city and look forward to their continued growth." Lisa Schweitzer Courtice, the executive vice president of The Columbus Foundation, presented the award and a check for \$5,000 to Catholic Social Services at the luncheon.

"We are honored and excited to be named one of the Five Nonprofits to Watch in 2017", stated Rachel Lustig, president and CEO of Catholic Social Services. "There has been tremendous growth in our organization over the past few years, and this award is just one form of validation that we are on the right track to meet the needs of seniors and families in our community."

The other four organizations honored by The Columbus Foundation include: Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland, Alvis, Ethiopian Tewahdo Social Services, and Homeport. ■



AGENCY SPOTLIGHT



By Heather Reynolds, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Fort Worth

When the least among us come to us in forms we don't recognize, will we be able to say that we did all we could?

Jimmy and his brother lived in the Congo, which was in the midst of a civil war. Their father owned a convenience store and worked long hours to provide for his family. Jimmy lived in a world in which uniformed people would come to his school and shoot students. One afternoon, when he and his brother were at the store, filling in for their father, they heard gunfire. They ran home, where they saw their house bombed to pieces and their parents dead, covered in blood. Jimmy told me that it was the toughest day of his life. He was 12. If he stayed, he would have been murdered too. The only option at that moment was a refugee camp which was rampant with disease and where he was given a bowl of rice to survive on every two weeks. The camp was his "home" for four years.

Jimmy applied for entrance into the United States and once he was approved, he was introduced to his new mother and father and their family. He said that he never knew he could have a family again,

or someone to call mom or dad. It reminded him of something his mother used to say: "You are not only my child. You are the son of all mothers and fathers." It helped him to accept his new home.

Presently, Jimmy is at the University of Texas at Dallas, studying political economics, working, and no longer reliant on his foster family. He told me that they "taught him to fish," and now it's up to him to work hard to get and stay where he wants to be. Thinking about his blessings, he mused: "there are some things you get by grace, but you don't deserve."

Doesn't that sound familiar? Herein lies our faith in action. Herein lies our opportunity. Herein lies our moral obligation. The conversation of today - the sensationalism, the fear, and the misunderstandings about refugees - this conversation is distracting and can get in the way of some of our most important work.

These refugees are people who have fled their homelands and cannot return because of persecution for a multitude of discriminatory reasons. Buried in that word, "persecution," are unimaginable

stories. Stories of children watching their fathers be brutally murdered. Stories of children watching their mothers get raped. Stories you've seen online, like the two-year-old Syrian toddler, his drowned body washed ashore, because his parents knew that it was better to risk their lives than to stay where they were.

Like many thinking Catholic Americans, I believe and know that the safety of our citizens and the concept of welcoming the stranger are not mutually exclusive. Prudence and compassion can coexist. It is our moral obligation to continue to serve our brothers and sisters in need.

Catholic Charities Fort Worth has been saying yes to welcoming the stranger since the 1970's, following the Vietnam War. Our refugee program has become one of our largest, longest-lasting, and most successful initiatives – now housing 11 refugee-specific programs and resettling 650 people a year. It expends over \$4 million of our annual operating budget.

There are 13 rigorous steps that must be fully completed before a refugee is permitted to enter the country (see "The Process of Resettling a Refugee," page 16). Many people may not know that these steps are timed; the whole process must be restarted if an expiration window is missed, or even if a woman becomes pregnant during the process. Less than one half of a percent of the existing 15 million refugees ever get resettled in a third party nation like ours. The balance either remain in their country of refuge or return to their home country. They hail from Burma (Myanmar), the Congo, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and more.

Once here, we help them navigate this new life: We pick them up from the airport and take them to their new home, provide culturally-appropriate food, safe housing, health assessments, cultural orientation, benefits enrollment, school and ESL enrollment including being a liaison between schools and families, job preparation, and citizenship services.

After the initial set up, we then focus on getting them employed. Our goal is for our refugees to reach self-sufficiency. And 96 percent do just that within six months of being here. To be honest, that's a better quota than our domestic clients. The employers we partner with in town rave about the work ethic and reliability of their refugee employees.

For the children in our international foster care program, all of them have lost parents to death, to militant raids, to separation when wandering the long journey to freedom, and other reasons too numerous to list. They come on their own, as siblings, or in groups, ranging from ages seven to 17. Most of the children we welcome have been living in refugee camps their whole lives, with limited or no access to school, healthcare, or adequate nutrition. Most are used to sharing one room with ten or more people. These children are some of the most resilient, independent young people you could meet. So much so, that in some we have to reinstate what it means to be a child.

On our end, we actively seek out, assess, and train foster families who are eager to welcome these children into their homes. We teach them about the children's countries of origin, and we provide a support base and a safety net from which the children can flourish.

And now we are stepping into the role of administering the federal funding for refugee resettlement in one of four regions in the State of Texas. The state has declined to administer these funds, which means we are responsible for disbursing them to the various refugee service providers in our region and for monitoring compliance. Since refugees will still be admitted into the State of Texas, we will continue to be here to help this population with open arms.

If we did not help, we would have more people on the street, in shelters, or in lines at the food bank. So it doesn't make much sense to halt the work. Many of the refugees whom we have helped in Fort Worth work at our local businesses, in government, or in their own businesses that they created. Many who have come to us are already doctors or lawyers, and they are patiently updating their credentials to be able to serve people in the United States. We know of nearly 100 refugees working here who have even saved up enough money to buy their own homes.

We are standing firm on our Catholic beliefs that it is our God-given obligation to honor the dignity and equality in all human beings. We must serve those to whom we have been entrusted to serve. Our Church, our charities, and our people just want to live the gospel and continue to be the nation of immigrants and refugees that we have always been. Sometimes we forget that Jesus Himself was a refugee. Can I get an Amen? ■

2017 UPCOMING TRAINING & EVENTS

May 8-9

Partners in Excellence
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Jean Beil
jbeil@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

May 22-26

Leadership Institute
Tampa, Fla.

Scott Hurd
shurd@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

May 24

**CCUSA Immigration & Refugee Services
Community of Practice**
Atlanta, Ga.

Jean Beil
jbeil@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

June 9-10

Partners in Excellence
Indianapolis, Ind.

Jean Beil
jbeil@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

June 26-29

The O'Grady Institute for Catholic Identity
St. Paul, Minn.

Fr. Mark Pranaitis
mpranaitis@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

July 10-11

Partners in Excellence
Oakland, Calif.

Jean Beil
jbeil@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org



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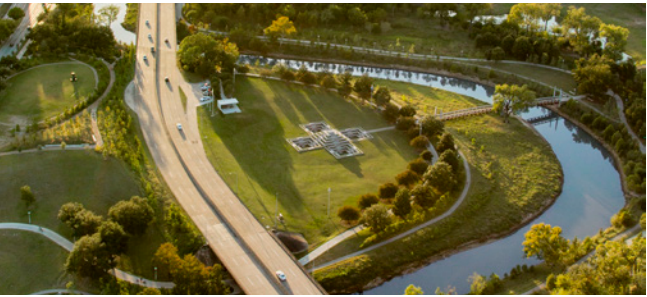
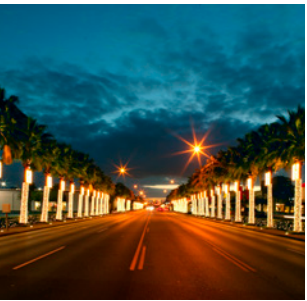


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Please visit our website: www.ccsaannualgathering.org

