

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION MINISTRIES REPORT (April 2014-Oct. 2014)

To Week of Compassion Fall 2014 Board Meeting

From Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley, Refugee & Immigration Ministries (RIM) Director

“There are more refugees and displaced people in the world now than at any point since World War II; over 51 million people—and more than half of them are children.”

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Global Trends Report, June 20, 2014

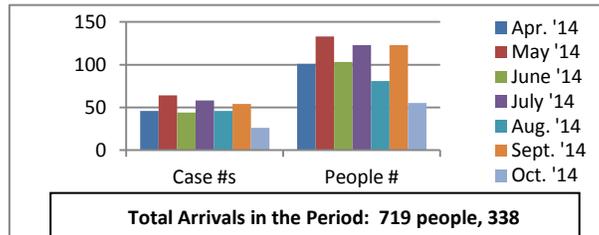
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is assigned 8% of ALL refugees resettled through U.S. Church World Service offices!

Per US State Dept. regulations, churches within a 50 mile radius of an approved refugee resettlement office are encouraged to sponsor and befriend refugees entering their areas. Beyond these bounds, ANY Disciples church is also requested to provide materials and funds for basic resettlement assistance such as pillows, sheets, school backpacks, clothing and furniture, holiday gifts, and special needs! Contact our Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, at: stanley@dhm.disciples.org or 202-957-7826. Our Disciples related refugee resettlement offices include Church World Service affiliates in: Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles & Sacramento, CA; Denver, CO; New Haven, CT; Miami, & Palm Beach, FL; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Indianapolis & South Bend, IN; Louisville & Lexington, KY; Grand Rapids, MI; Minneapolis, MN; Lincoln & Omaha, NE; Greensboro & Durham, NC; Concord, NH; Buffalo, Rochester, & Syracuse, NY; Columbus, OH; Portland, OR; Lancaster, PA; Knoxville, TN; Austin, Amarillo, Dallas, Ft. Worth, & Houston, TX, Harrisonburg, & Richmond, VA.

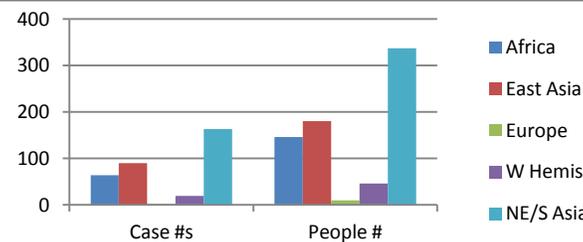
Disciples-Assigned Refugee Arrivals and Engagement Report thru Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Case and Individual Numbers of Arrivals by Month for FY April thru mid-Oct, 2014

Highest Numbers of Refugees Entered This Period Thru Offices in TX, CA, NY, IN, NC, VA, GA, KY, OH, and AZ



Refugee Arrival Nationalities by Region



Top Nationalities of Refugee Family Cases for Disciples this period were Burmese, Iraqi, Somalian, Bhutanese, Cuban, Congolese, & Iranian

To strengthen the building of relationships with and support for refugee families, RIM does the following:

- ❖ Refugee needs, and the partnership of RIM and WoC in serving refugees, are highlighted constantly throughout the year-- and in every presentation made by RIM! Throughout the past six months, our shared commitments have been lifted up in Regional Assemblies (including recently Virginia and the CCCA), thru National Conferences (at QA, Hispanic National Assembly, and NAPAD), in board meetings with SWGSM, in district meetings (as in the Richmond District VII), in pulpits (in Va., D.C., Md., and Tx.), at a national refugee conference (in Az.), and in personal visits to local churches and to our CWS affiliate refugee offices (most recently in Tx. And Va.) RIM has developed a “Refugee Hospitality Kits” promotional which has resulted in Refugee Kits being created in Louisiana, Virginia, and Colorado, and elsewhere! A growing number of congregations are expressing interest in refugee partnerships and sponsorships, most recently from congregations in Colorado, Texas, and Virginia. RIM’s Director continues to Co-Chair the Immigration & Refugee Program committee with Church World Service, NY, and has been instrumental in assisting CWS in updating its “Refugee Welcome Guide.”
- ❖ A “Montagnard Human Rights Consultation” was held in Washington, D.C. on September 29th. The RIM Director organized, hosted, and accompanied sixteen Montagnard refugees from Charlotte and Greensboro, N.C., together with Pastor Nancy Carol Stahl from First Christian Church in Charlotte, in attending seven meetings with human rights experts, legislative staff, and an ambassador. Concerns of persecution and human rights violations among their remaining populations in the Central Highlands of Vietnam were discussed, and strategies were developed for ongoing follow ups.



Meetings were held on Capitol Hill and in facilities at National City Christian Church (where the RIM office is located). (See photos above of Disciples Montagnard church participants.)

- ❖ RIM is in the process of developing a “RIM Advisory Board,” to support our ongoing work and further engage churches.



WoC Refugee Emergency Assistance Provided through RIM

In partnership with WoC, RIM continues to provide emergency assistance to Disciples-assigned families through support of the Week of Compassion’s “Compassion in Action” Fund. Most requests are received through Church World Service refugee affiliate offices for cases where refugee families face extreme and unmet family, health, and mental health needs. Funds are provided to Refugee & Immigration Ministries by Week of Compassion at



\$5,000/time, and then are disbursed, if and as emergency needs require, from the RIM office. All disbursements to families indicate the support is given in partnership with the Week of Compassion of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). 2104 Assistance has included:

- ❖ In January of 2014, refugee emergency funds were provided to assist an Armenian single mother’s treatment for breast cancer in the Los Angeles area, and to support a Bhutanese family in Atlanta whose father committed suicide due to post traumatic stress and other mental health challenges following arrival.
- ❖ In April, \$1,650 was sent for family rental assistance support during time of Iraqi husband’s recent Stage 2 cancer diagnosis, subsequent treatments, and accompanying deep depression. The family had arrived in Chicago in July, 2013. Funds allowed wife to engage in work search and provided needed childcare support.
- ❖ In August, \$1,500 was offered to a family of 9 born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who escaped militia forces, fled to Burundi, and arrived in Chicago in March, 2014. The parents went to work immediately, then one was laid off. Among the two work age children, one had a severe motorcycle accident, and has undergone recent surgery. WoC funds provided “bridge” assistance for rent over the three months as their son recovers.
- ❖ In addition to the above grants, a unique partnership between RIM, WoC, and the First Christian Church of Lynchburg, Va. developed through the summer to woman named Hawa, who is persecution due to threats received the freedom of young girls to not be Lynchburg community to study in The church continues to financially as she builds her language skills and case. Her final asylum hearing will be held in October near D.C., and the RIM Director will host and accompany her to that appointment. The church has already contributed over \$8,500 in funds through WoC, which have been disbursed by RIM, to cover her expenses! The RIM Director will preach to encourage this ongoing partnership at the church in late October.



Unaccompanied Minor Children Crisis Response

“The U.S. has served more refugees and refugee-like populations this year than in any years since the Cuban entrants in 1962 and the Indochinese special arrivals in the 1980’s.”

Eskinder Negash, Office of Refugee Resettlement Director, in Washington, D.C., at a meeting of ecumenical partners, including WoC and RIM, Oct. 15



Beginning early summer, and continuing daily throughout the period of this report, the RIM office has consistently partnered, provided leadership, and strategized with WoC regarding the ongoing unaccompanied children’s crisis.

- ❖ **As child arrivals from El Salvador, Guatemala, and especially**

Honduras far exceeded mounting recent year totals to a level now over 60,000 in 2014, RIM met daily with ecumenical refugee and immigration colleagues to develop and compile information on root causes, church responses, children’s needs, and advocacy campaigns to support the children. In late June, RIM gathered leadership from the General Minister and President, Disciples Home Missions, Global Ministries, and Disciples Women to draft a letter together that outlined immediate concerns and recommendations for the children. This letter was presented at a congressional hearing in June.



Education about the crisis and ongoing advocacy participation opportunities to protect the children against trafficking and once here were provided at Disciples conferences throughout the summer, and continue to be offered to churches and individuals to promote their response gifts to WoC and to engage disciples directly in meeting children's needs. A "Top 10 Ways" for churches and individuals to outreach to Central American child refugees has been developed in both general and geographically specific versions, and links them to multiple national and global offices of the CC(DOC). Numerous background pieces have also been gathered, and resources are offered at the RIM weblink of:

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/rim-resources/> (under "Arriving Children in Crisis").

- ❖ In partnership with WoC, RIM has been pleased to staff crisis background and resource phone calls with Dr. Watkins, and with related denominational and regional ministry leaders on July 22. RIM has and continues to collaborate with WoC in the identification of funding needs and programs, and celebrates the immediate contributions to Church World Service for religious services at the Artesia family residential center, as well as contributions for Disciples outreach through SWGSM, and the Lilies of the Valley program there. RIM also supports the contributions of WoC to international mission partners working on root causes and follow ups as children are returned; especially through our mission partners in Honduras.
- ❖ RIM partnered with the Hispanic National Assembly to gather over \$600+ for support items for unaccompanied children south of San Diego, deliver the items to a local interfaith ministry, and lead a prayer vigil with 22 participants on the San Ysidro border.
- ❖ WoC support for additional CWS appeals have met critical legal needs of the children, and RIM has been pleased to partner with WoC in specific efforts aimed to "multiply" church and individual "matching funds" for this need. One example was when RIM secured matching funds from North Chevy Chase Christian Church for the WoC contribution for legal support of \$1,500 for the children. This matching program is called the "Third Tithe" for the children, and is highlighted in an article found at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/news/september-2014/disciples-support-legal-assistance-central-american-children-fleeing-violence/>. (Also see photo above.)



National Farm Worker Ministry Support & Farm Worker Actions



Amidst ongoing refugee and children's crises, the RIM office also continued our historic Disciples partnership with The National Farmworker Ministry, by serving on its board, providing regular campaign support for its key initiatives, and educating and linking churches to promote farm worker rights. During this report period, RIM:

- ❖ Invited Park Avenue Christian Church Pastors Rev. Dr. Alvin Jackson and Rev. Luis-Alfredo Catagena to offer a faith voice for farmworker rights at the meeting of Phillip Morris International's Annual Meeting in New York city on May 1st. Their testimony secured a meeting between workers, Farm Labor Organizing.
- ❖ Presented to hundreds of Disciples Women at QA, encouraging them to support the rights and protections of tobacco field workers (both adults and children) by signing faith letters to Reynolds Tobacco and Human Rights Watch, and creating a prayer quilt for farmworker concerns and bracelets for farmworker rights.
- ❖ RIM is in the process of re-developing a Disciples "Farmworker Ministry Advisory Board," to further support these ministries, and continue to engage churches to support farmworker goals.
- ❖ Encouraged Disciples to participate in the National Farm Worker Ministry's key campaigns and partners; including support for the actions of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, the United Farm Workers, the Equitable Food Initiative, the Sakuma Berry Farms Campaign, and the Campesinos' Garden Project.
- ❖ Attended all NFWM Board Meetings, and helped work with their fundraising banquet.

Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries Support

- ❖ Participated as DHM representative in Fall meeting of Board, provided immigration ministries report, and consulted about ongoing support links between RIM/DHM, WoC, and SWGSM.
- ❖ Assisted with Epiphany emphasis ministry awareness campaign to occur in January.
- ❖ Represented General Ministries in recognizing retirement of Raquel Garcia from SWGSM.
- ❖ Provided background training re: unaccompanied children's crisis, and promoted linkages between SWGSM, Lilies of the Valley, and additional faith contacts working with children in Rio Grande Valley.
- ❖ Reported to board at April 24-26 meeting. (Could not attend due to father-in-law's death.)



Immigration Advocacy Faith Leadership and Partnerships



Throughout the time period of this report, RIM has worked to strengthen our Disciples network for immigrant rights within the denomination and built faith partnerships to support permanent and humane solutions to immigrant needs. Campaigns during the past six months have heightened participation in requests for administrative action to support families, continued to request the House of Representatives to pass immigration legislation, and—in the absence of either administrative or congressional action, are supporting safer deportations practices in the meantime. RIM also continues to share tools for civic engagement and Sanctuary practices for interested congregations. Resources and presentations of advocacy priorities will continue to be shared throughout Disciples partnership venues, regional and district meetings, in congregations, and via social media.

Highlights of recent/current advocacy during the period include:

- ❖ Engaged in writing and sending faith statements, White House staff visits, civil disobedience, and strategy building together with ecumenical faith partners to raise awareness of family suffering and encourage administrative action to stop family separations and improve detention practices.
- ❖ Participated in & recruited Disciples to engage in ongoing rallies, Press Conferences (with bipartisan congressional colleagues, multi-faith partners, immigrant rights advocates, etc.) to support the representation key faith values such as family unity, path to citizenship, support for the vulnerable, workers' rights, humanitarian border practices, awareness of root causes of migration.
- ❖ Provided leadership in grassroots actions such as the Fast 4 Families cross-country bus tours; encouraging participants to link with the tour in its travels, joining to assist with leadership while in Virginia, and participating in the closing in D.C.
- ❖ Supported, led prayers, and represented Disciples of Christ in immigration events, vigils, and trainings.
- ❖ Led visits of advocates from multiple states and congregations, and provided hospitality and logistical aid to advocates fasting and conducting prayer events in the D.C. area.
- ❖ Engaged Disciples church and general ministry leaders in advocacy to promote education and highlight Disciples commitments.



Please contact the RIM Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, at stanley@dhm.disciples.org or 202-957-7826 to engage together in advocacy priorities, call upon us to encourage your local immigration and refugee work, and come alone or with a group to join our ministries and visit our office in National City Christian Church, 5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, D.C. For legal immigration assistance, also contact Tana Liu-Beers, at: tana@dhm.disciples.org or at 317-289-1407.

