



Their Journey Is Our Journey

Stories from the Bus Station Ministry—compiled by Jan Olsen

If you walk by the Greyhound Bus Station in Downtown San Antonio on any day of the week, you will see an amazing sight.....seated in one area are mothers and children who are seeking asylum in the United states after their release from Family Detention Centers. All their possessions are in two grocery bags as they await their buses to take them to sponsors in cities all over the United States. Moving among these families are volunteers from the Interfaith Welcome Coalition. This is a group of very passionate and dedicated volunteers who make up the Back Pack Ministry. You will find them at the downtown Greyhound bus station and the San Antonio airport seven days a week. They are there to welcome and offer support to the women and children after their release from the family detention centers at Dilly and Karnes. These families have endured unbelievable hardships to get to this point so expressions of “bienvenido”, smiles, backpacks, lunches and explanations of travel are moments of much needed kindness and compassion. In addition to the Bus Station ministry, IWC also has volunteers at the San Antonio International Airport where they offer the same support to families who are traveling



Dedicated bus station volunteers: Jan Olsen, Treedy Chapa, Leslie Hernandez & Sandy Enders

by air.

The work of the bus station volunteers is greatly supported by the Greyhound Bus Station staff. Everyone from the General Manager, the ticket sellers, cafeteria workers and the custodial staff are welcoming and kind to our families. They go out of their way to make sure our families receive the support that they need.

The Organization that supports this ministry is the Interfaith Welcome Coalition. The IWC, a San Antonio area based coalition of faith communities, organizations, and individuals, works collaboratively to welcome to our community refugees, asylum seekers and at risk immigrants, particularly women and children, and walk along side them in their journey.

One of the projects of the IWC is the Back Pack Ministry which supports their goal of providing material support for asylum seeking mothers and children as they journey from the family detention centers to their final destinations within the United States.

These are the stories of some of our volunteers that convey the challenges, the joy and the deep satisfaction of this work.

Simple but profound a joyful walk Sandy Enders

I have been an Interfaith Welcome Coalition bus station volunteer for almost one year. My anger and grief over the election results of 2016 were the catalyst that indirectly led me to this touching, fulfilling, yet heartbreaking ministry. Until this time, I was content in my insulated, safe environment, naïve toward the entire immigration process, especially people seeking asylum. The hardships that these women and children endure have humbled me and opened my eyes to the injustices in our world and our country.

Their appreciation of this ministry is very touching. Another

volunteer and I frequently take the families waiting for an evening bus on a short stroll along the San Antonio Riverwalk. One mother sincerely stated that this walk was the best thing that she had experienced during her entire two month journey toward asylum.

“Whenever we do not understand what’s happening in life, just close our eyes, take a deep breath and say: “God, I know you have a plan. Just help us through it”.

I offer this prayer for the mothers and children and all the volunteers.

