



# the Lantern

Spring 2019 • Volume 14, Issue #1

A newsletter of the Presentation Lantern Center  
Sponsored by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, IA

## The Massive Human Problem ★

Maura McCarthy, PBVM

Like so many of you, I have tracked the continued eye-catching news of thousands of Central American immigrants arriving at our Southern border. The news is confusing and disquieting.

Some politicians describe the influx as “an invasion” of our country that must be curtailed. Migrants are daubed by some politicians as “criminals, gang members or drug cartel affiliates”.

Those who know immigrants personally recognize that this onset of distressed families is a “consequence of forced displacement caused by the widespread systematic violence suffered by men, women, children and entire families who flee from poverty and impunity in their countries of origin.”

The LCWR, (Leadership Conference of Women Religious), received requests from immigrant hospitality centers in McAllen, TX; San Benito, TX; El Paso, TX and other centers, for economic help and for volunteers--especially those who speak Spanish. The Presentation Sisters of Dubuque rapidly responded with a generous economic contribution and asked for volunteers who might respond to this request. Leaders from the Aberdeen Presentations called Sister Carmen Hernandez here in Dubuque about creating a Presentation mission team.

“Could I possibly go?” I was thinking, wondering if my energy level would match the needs of the dozens of refugees seeking asylum in a single day. Sister Myra Remily, a Presentation from Aberdeen, SD, and former co-missioner in Bolivia and Sister Clarice Korger, a Benedictine from Yankton, SD, were planning to go. I too soon asked to be counted in.

I flew to El Paso from Dubuque and the



Sr. Maura helping an asylum seeker find donated clothing in her size. Asylum seekers often only have the clothes on her back while in the cold ICE detention centers for weeks or months.

others from Sioux Falls, SD, and met at Loretto Convent, a large facility owned by the Sisters of Loretto, so well known and loved in the city. The taxi driver did not recognize the street address, but when he heard the name “Loretto”, he knew exactly how to get there. The Loretto Sisters are still responsible for Loretto Academy, an esteemed school for girls, built “facing Mexico” that receives young women students from El Paso and others from Juarez who daily trek across the border to attend classes. Loretto Convent now houses several nongovernmental offices and reserves about 16 bedrooms and a kitchenette for volunteers serving refugees at the Annunciation hospitality centers. El Paso is considered one of the safest cities in our country. Over 90 percent of the city is thought to be bilingual.

The volunteer Sisters and associates who stay in the Loretto Convent come from all over the United States. Most are bilingual, but several are not. The volunteers

*Continued on page 2*

## GRAND INDOOR GARAGE & BAKE SALE!

**Where:** Mt. Loretto -  
2360 Carter Road, Dubuque

**Thursday, April 27:** 8AM-Dusk  
**Friday, April 28:** 8AM- Dusk  
**Saturday, April 27th:** 8AM-1PM  
**Thursday, May 2nd:** 8AM-7PM  
**Friday, May 3rd:** 8AM-7PM  
**Saturday, May 3rd:** 8AM-1PM

\*\*\*Proceeds benefit both the Presentation Lantern Center and Catholic Charities Legal Immigration Services! Thank you, Sisters & Associates!!!!



Asylum seekers and/or their families must pay their own way for their tickets to family members' residences throughout the U.S. They stay with them, awaiting their asylum hearing. Pictured, Maura & other volunteers use basic Spanish to help them buy tickets, as there are almost no interpreters capable of speaking K'iche or Ixil, Mayan languages many asylum seekers speak. Spanish is often their second or third language, if they went to a bilingual school and learned Spanish.

## Massive Human Problem cont.

provide services such as noting basic information when the immigrants arrive, assigning rooms and providing bedding and toilet articles, making phone calls to the families, distributing clothing, packing lunches for those traveling, providing basic medicines, cooking and serving meals, driving immigrants to the airport or bus station as well as being a welcoming presence.

Sisters Myra, Clarice and I were asked to prepare breakfast, dinner and supper for the immigrants for nearly three days. We were so grateful that Sister Myra had some past experience in food service management for large numbers of persons. Sister Clarice was a practicing LPN before becoming a Benedictine. This skill was frequently needed by persons suffering from colds or upset stomachs.

This volunteer endeavor is a rich interchange with the courageous and risk-taking immigrants from Central America; is an opportunity to share mission with many volunteers from El Paso; and is an invitation to share community with religious Sisters from all over the United States.

Reuben Garcia, founder of Annunciation House, which has now extended its refugee hospitality to approximately fifteen centers throughout the city of El Paso, TX, provided conceptual and practical orientation to the Religious Sisters and associates arriving to offer services to the migrants there. Reuben explained that the refugees are offered a shower, a complete change of clothing, beds with clean sheets and blankets, and meals until contact is made by the volunteers with relatives and friends who sponsor the migrants' travel to towns and cities across the United States. Reuben has prudently and painstakingly created a satisfactory communication rapport with ICE, (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), to the extent that he advises ICE how many immigrants each hospitality center can receive on a given day. The large unmarked white bus drops off the immigrants at each center between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. each afternoon. An exception to this was Christmas Eve and the day after when dozens of immigrants were left in the cold on the streets of El Paso. Reuben Garcia emphatically declares that

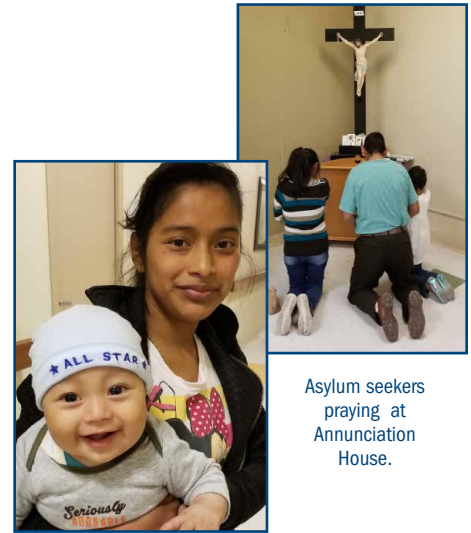
Annunciation House has never had to call the police; an ambulance, yes, but police never.

The immigrants who stay at the Annunciation centers graciously offer to help out wherever they can. Angela helped me organize and arrange clothing in the distribution room and when I complimented her on her organizing skill, she commented on her personal love of order. Mercedes began directing the cooking team with superb skill. Oscar offered to take charge of cleaning the dining room tables and wiping up the floor, and then to find another to take over when he left.

Reuben Garcia and the hundreds of volunteers from the El Paso area adamantly deny the narrative that refugees and immigrants are dangerous. Annunciation House with the faith communities and partner organizations have been providing hospitality to thousands of families every week. The incorrect impression that refugees and immigrants make our country unsafe is so definitely not true, the volunteers restate. These hundreds of volunteers, like so many lowans, have seen with their own eyes that immigrants overwhelmingly become industrious and valued contributing citizens of our communities and of our country.

Reuben spoke about the massive human heartbreak happening in El Paso and other areas of our country: "Poverty is to be without options. The migrants are here because they have no other option. They are here because they have no other choice. You must understand that this is not just a problem at the border. This is a massive human problem that is befalling our family--my family. We need to do something about what is happening to our brothers and sisters!"

I am delighted to share the news that six Presentation Sisters will be going to the border soon: in March-- Sisters Julianne Brockamp and Myra Remily of South Dakota, and Sisters Kay Cota and I of Dubuque; and two in April: Sisters Carmen Hernandez of Dubuque and Jessi Beck of Chicago.



Asylum seekers praying at Annunciation House.

A mother and child who walked 2,000 miles to seek asylum. The infant has spent over half of his life en route to refuge.

## Did You Know? ★

Supporters from 188 communities in 34 states have contributed to the Presentation Lantern Center in the course of our 16-year history!

**In 2018, individual donations made up just over 40 percent of our budget.**

**Thank you!**

**Without your financial support we would not be able to continue the life-changing work we do.**

**Please consider becoming a sustaining supporter, by signing up to give a monthly donation. To do this, go to [thelanterncenter.org](http://thelanterncenter.org) and click on "donate" or contact us at 563-557-7134.**

## Appreciation ★ Event for Donors, Volunteers and Students

We appreciate and need ALL of you! Please keep an eye out for a very special volunteer and donor recognition event, coming up later in the year.

# Advocacy is Vital

by Jessica Brown

*“In the face of impossible odds, people who love this country can change it.” – Barack Obama*

Taking steps to initiate positive social change can seem like a daunting task—especially when trying to make changes that will surely impact everyone within a society. We want to keep everyone happy, safe, and comfortable in our society, so we must be willing to direct our attention to groups that need a little more TLC. To truly make societal progress, it is imperative to use a framework consistent with Catholic social teaching to guide our actions in serving underprivileged groups in society. Immigrants—locally and nationally—face systemic hardships that cannot be overlooked, and as allies we must look for ways to advocate for our immigrant neighbors.

To do my part in advocating for immigrants, I examined current bills proposed in the Iowa state legislature that might impact our local immigrant population. Senate File 243 caught my attention as a proposed bill that could have a number of potential consequences if put into action. SF 243 is an entirely republican-sponsored bill that “relates to the employment of unauthorized aliens and provides penalties”. The penalties detailed in the bill would apply to employers who hire undocumented workers. The bill would also offer government incentives to employers who participate in the e-verify system—a governmental database that spits out the citizenship status of each worker in a matter of minutes. There is no action in the proposed bill that would require employers to report undocumented workers to officials, but there is also nothing stated that prevents employers from reporting immigrants, thus jeopardizing the safety and stability of

undocumented immigrant families in our own community. With the possibility of those we serve facing hardship with the passing of this bill, I felt compelled to talk to my state legislators.

Fortunately, a social work class at Loras was taking a trip to the state capitol to practice lobbying skills. I went with this class last spring where we lobbied as a group, but I felt that it was time for me to take off my training wheels and lobby on my own, this time on behalf of the Presentation Lantern Center and the students we serve. I hopped on the bus with my fellow Loras social workers, ready to discuss the implications of SF 243 with our Iowa legislators.

## Pros & Cons of SF 243

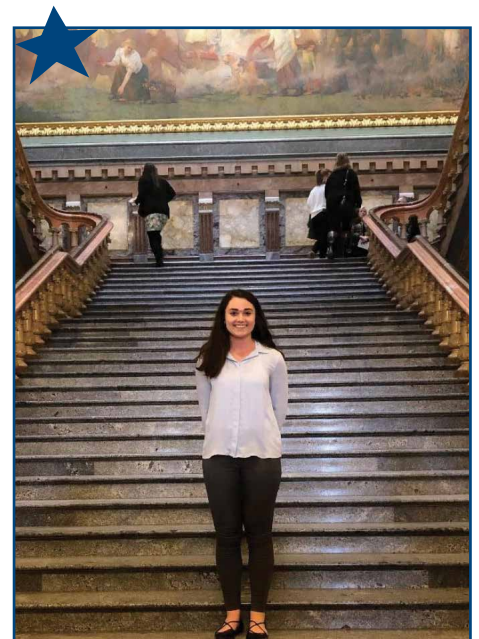
It was important to understand potential outcomes of this bill before going into the lobbying experience itself,

### Pros:

- Holds employers accountable for possible exploitation of labor
- Encourages employers to comply with ethical, legal standards
- Does not mandate employers to use e-verify system, nor does it mandate them to report non-citizens

### Cons:

- Increases the threat of immigrants being reported, thus increases fear amongst an already fearful community
- Decreases production in vital Iowan economies. Many undocumented workers work in factories or the agricultural industry—jobs that many Americans do not want. Undocumented workers are the “unseen” propellants to these industries, so we may see a lack of economic growth in these large



Jess Brown, Lantern Center Intern, senior in social work at Loras College at the Iowa State Capital in Des Moines.

Midwestern industries if their labor force is diminished or falls short of their production needs.

- Undocumented workers are less likely to find jobs locally, thus are more likely to migrate elsewhere—places where their labor might be exploited.
- The law does not offer protections to immigrants and appears to be a punitive measure to decrease the number of undocumented immigrants living in Iowa

## The Lobbying Experience

With the pros and cons of the bill in mind, I attempted to speak with as many legislators as possible. Unfortunately, many legislators were busy with meetings and unable to meet, but I left my contact information with their staffers.

I was able to meet with one Republican co-sponsor of the bill, Polk County Senator Zach Nunn. **Continued on page 4.**



Pictured is Julia Quitian, current and former Lantern Center student, whose story is featured in our spring letter, enclosed.



Sr. Hermann, PBVM, Board Secretary on left and Sr. McCormick on right are pictured with Sahr Lebbie (holing cake), who passed his citizenship test.

## Advocacy is Vital Cont.

My conversation with Senator Nunn was an amicable and productive one, lasting for about 45 minutes. He shared many of the same concerns that I did, but maintained that the bill was a step in the right direction as it will hold employers accountable for potential exploitation. He was receptive to my perspective and agreed that we needed to make more of an effort at the federal level to expedite the naturalization process for deserving, hard-working immigrants of all backgrounds. Senator Nunn was appreciative of our open and honest dialogue and encouraged me to share his contact information with more people from our center. It was truly inspiring to see an Iowa senator so committed to

bipartisanship and so willing to learn from diverse populations.

Though my experience with Senator Nunn was most definitely positive, he warned me that other Republican co-sponsors of the bill simply see it as “anti-immigrant” and are voting for it for that reason only. It is important to push our legislators to be more comprehensive when voting for bills,

so we must use our knowledge and voices as advocates to influence our legislators, whether we are their constituents or not. We must be willing to work together to make Iowa a place where everyone can feel safe and contribute to the collective success of the country.

### What you can do

- **RESEARCH.** Go to <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/> to study and check up on the status of current proposed bills.
- **CONTACT** your state legislators—**ENCOURAGE** them to support bills that promote the integration of Iowa’s immigrant population. Find your legislators at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators>
- **ENGAGE** by participating in community organizations that promote public discourse on such controversial issues.

**Editors note:** We learned in mid-April that the e-verify bill did not pass in Iowa, as politicians on both sides of the aisle deemed it generally bad for businesses, our economy, and immigrants.



SCHMID INNOVATION CENTER  
900 Jackson Street  
Suite LL5-1  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

The Presentation Lantern Center is a drop-in center offering hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants, especially women, who are striving to better their lives. Founded by The Sisters of the Presentation. Generously sustained through donations from our founders and individual donors like you. Thank you and God bless you.

### HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Tuesday, Thursday  
1:00 PM - 7:00 PM

### Contact us at

563-557-7134  
[thelanterncenter@gmail.com](mailto:thelanterncenter@gmail.com)

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tim Moothart  
President

Mary Lou Mauss  
Vice-President

Lynn Marie Fangman, PBVM  
Treasurer

Mary Hermann Platt, PBVM  
Secretary

Marilou Irons, PBVM

Joy Peterson, PBVM

Brad Kane

Kevin Deeny

Carol Walsh

Leanne Welch, PBVM

We welcome your support and prayers. Your generosity touches many lives and hearts from around the world.

Please make checks payable to Presentation Lantern Center.

### Visit us at

[www.thelanterncenter.org](http://www.thelanterncenter.org)

### Like us at

[www.facebook.com/  
PresentationLanternDubuque](https://www.facebook.com/PresentationLanternDubuque)

### Follow us at

[@LanternDBQ](https://twitter.com/LanternDBQ)

[@thelanterncenter](https://www.instagram.com/thelanterncenter)

## Snapshots Around the Lantern Center



Students Bo Li and Wei Tian dying Easter eggs with Professor Julie Phillips & UD Teacher Ed. students. Tutors & students work hard & have a conversational English/tea time “break” in the middle of their 2 hr. tutoring session.



Sr. Carol Besch, OSF, reads to the child of a student learning English at the Presentation Lantern Center. We have a cozy, safe area for kids to create, learn and play while their parents and caretakers meet with tutors.



Spring is in the air, and the leprechauns are afoot! For St. Patrick’s Day, we did a fun activity making leprechauns and making up a story about each leprechaun. One student, from Mexico, said his leprechaun was half-Irish and half-Mexican. Pancho O’Kelly comes in and play tricks on people! The activity was fun and silly, but it’s still teaching conversational English skills. When you can tell a joke in a second language, you know you’re getting somewhere!



Volunteers and tutors from Wahlert High School, Divine Word College and Wartburg Seminary worked together to update our citizenship cards so that they reflect our most recently-elected officials.