

FAMILY ROUTES



A Monthly Newsletter by International Social Service, USA

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020 AND LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021

2020

Strategic Planning

Over the course of three board meetings, ISS-USA board and staff conducted its strategic planning process via ZOOM setting an ambitious agenda for 2021-2023. ISS-USA is excited to act on the values that fuel all that we do: Integrity, collaboration, sustainability, equity, mission-driven and compassion.

COVID-19 Impact on Repatriation

The "pandemic effect" began in early February when ISS-USA developed around the clock remote case management assistance procedures to assist the US Department Health and Human Services Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response (HHS/OHSEPR) in aiding Americans first evacuating from Wuhan, China, and then from all over the globe. ISS-USA case managers provided information about travel resources (flights, hotels, transport) and linked returnees to services (housing, how to access benefits, and other forms of assistance) upon return.

Giving Tuesday Campaign

ISS-USA wrapped up its Giving Tuesday campaign, *Connecting Twogether* at the end of the year. With continuous support from you, ISS-USA managed to organically raise over \$10,000 that has been matched by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund! ISS-USA obtained over 250 new connections across social media platforms and obtained over 20 new donors. The funds go directly to serving more vulnerable children and families.

New Contract with New Mexico

ISS-USA is excited to add the state of New Mexico to the states for whom ISS-USA provides cross border services such as finding families, home studies, and post placement follow-up by ongoing contractual arrangement. ISS-USA is contracted by New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Arizona.

Seeking more information about how to engage ISS-USA for your cross border service needs please write to question@iss-usa.org.

2021

COVID-19 Vaccine

ISS-USA remains patient and hopeful as the vaccine is becoming available to more people. The mere fact that there is now a vaccine, means better days are amongst us! Updated and accurate information regarding the vaccine can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html>

ISS-USA and the HYBRID office environment

When vaccines are available to everyone, ISS-USA plans to implement a hybrid office model. This will allow staff the flexibility to work from home and work from the office. As we learn more, the priority will remain keeping everyone safe and healthy. Currently the majority of staff remain working remotely, with individuals working at the office one at a time on occasion.

Paylocity: Payroll and Human Resources in the cloud

ISS-USA is rolling out Paylocity, an all-in-one HR and payroll system which will reduce administrative tasks, enable faster processing of payroll and empower employees to engage with all HR and payroll features through Paylocity's portal. The transition will automate many current tasks which will result in a less time consuming and more efficient HR and payroll process for all.

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[Donate here to help ISS reunite families across borders!](#)

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DEMANDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL FAMILIES

The last four years of our government have implemented swift and massive changes to domestic and foreign policy. More recently, 2020 presented some of our most pressing social issues in American history. Our country experienced an un-precedented global pandemic, came to grips with racial justice, and watched as President Trump spearheaded a crisis by separating families at the border. In turn, the U.S. social service system has been tasked with filling pre-existing gaps that were revealed and exacerbated by the Trump Administration. While most would consider this to be a distant issue it can be argued that it is present in the everyday lives of most Americans. As the daily news cycle provided updates, I never would have imagined bearing witness to children being manipulated for political gain. Yet, this seemingly novel crisis is sadly an echo of previous policies that have worked to further marginalize already vulnerable people groups in America. While it is easy to turn a blind eye and deaf ear the truth remains that the border crisis is ongoing and runs the risk of continuing if the next Presidential Administration refuses to address it. Thus, it is imperative the incoming Administration learn from previous decisions to effectuate long lasting change.

In turn, ISS-USA remains consistent in an ever-changing societal issue. This white paper is a call to action for the Biden-Harris Administration. It is my hope that the proceeding document serves as a catalyst to much-needed conversations and inspires actions that will move the needle forward in social justice for those who are most in need. Hopefully, this paper sparks initiative amongst policymakers and community stakeholders alike and gives way to a new system that is better equipped with serving the next generation.

Read the full white paper [here](#).



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ISS-USA attends Arthur C. Helton Memorial Lecture hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations

Julie Rosicky attended the Arthur C. Helton Memorial Lecture—Migrants and the U.S. Southern Border on Monday Feb 1, 2021. Presenters included Alfredo Corchado, Author; Mexico Border Correspondent, Dallas Morning News; Will Hurd, Former U.S. Representative from Texas (R), U.S. House of Representatives; Elora Mukherjee, Jerome L. Greene Clinical Professor of Law, and Director of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic, Columbia Law School and presiding over the conversation was Ethan Bronner, Senior Editor, Bloomberg News. Topics discussed included the U.S.' violation of the Refugee Act in regards to the "remain in Mexico" order and the dire situation of the more than 60,000 migrants exposed to violence, crime, and horrendous and unsafe living conditions. Speakers also pontificated on what elements of immigration reform might be agreed upon for the more than 11 million people in the U.S. who currently do not have status.

"The hardest thing for an immigrant is to leave home" stated Alfredo Corchado. A lively discussion ensued about the importance of investing in, for the long-term, efforts to address the root causes of migration. ISS-USA, based on its return and reintegration work with separated families believes that there is a dire need to invest in and strengthen child protection across the region, including increasing the social work case management workforce particularly in remote areas.

**Did you know,
approximately 1 in
4 children in the
United States has
a foreign-born
parent?**

Tune in to Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast featuring Elaine Weisman our Program and Training Manager. Elaine speaks about providing cross-border child welfare case management and the misperceptions around cross-border families and issues.

"To be child-centered in the way we are doing this work is about making informed decisions that are based on facts, rather than assumptions about other countries and other places and that you have the resources to do that."

[Tune in here!](#)



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ISS-USA Intern to CEO: "ISS-USA is where I found my purpose."



Kristyn Peck Chief Executive Office
of Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)

Q: You were an intern in September 2004 - May 2005. What was your experience with ISS-USA like back then?

A: I was a Case Management Intern facilitating intercountry communication and reunifications of children and families who had been separated by migration. I also worked under Marty Scherr as a policy intern, where I learned about children's rights and supported advocacy efforts for the U.S. ratification of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was my first experience working on issues related to migration and human rights. I knew I wanted to be a social worker, but this role inspired me to work on refugee and migration issues.

Q: How did you hear about the organization in 2004? How did you apply for the internship?

A: I was placed with ISS-USA through the University of Maryland's Graduate School of Social Work. I wasn't initially supposed to be placed with ISS-USA, my first placement elsewhere fell through. I am grateful it did because it was at ISS-USA where I found my purpose. If I had not interned for ISS-USA, I would not be doing what I am doing today!

Q: How has the organization grown in your opinion?

A: ISS-USA is great at identifying the evolving needs of families based on what is happening in the world and finding new and improved ways to serve. They are thought leaders in intercountry child and family services and are always growing their partnerships to further their work and impact.

Q: Can you tell me about your career progression after your internship with ISS-USA?

A: After interning with ISS-USA, I worked for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service where I provided recommendations on the best interests of unaccompanied children placed in federal custody due to their immigration status. My next role was at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), helping develop and administer their national program that served survivors of human trafficking. In that role, I learned that when systems fail people, you must work to change the system, and I used my program experience to inform policy and advocacy priorities. I spent 11 years at USCCB, in progressive leadership roles. In my last four years, I served as the Associate Director of Children's Services, overseeing the organization's programs for unaccompanied children and engaging in administrative and legislative advocacy to advance development of policies and programs to protect unaccompanied children and ensure their best interest. I left in 2017 to serve as the founding CEO for West Michigan Partnership for Children, an organization that is piloting an innovative foster care model to improve child and family outcomes. Desiring to be closer to family, I returned to the D.C. metro area, joining Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA) as their CEO on November 30th.



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Q: Can you tell me about your current work? What is the mission? What are the key priorities?

A: I am currently the Chief Executive Officer of Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, which has been serving the D.C. metro area for more than 100 years. Our mission is to offer hope, rebuild lives and create welcoming communities. Our key priorities in 2021 are to increase our partnerships and capacity to serve New Americans through our Good Neighbor Partners, refugee resettlement, CARE for Newcomers, and employment programs; provide a safe haven to unaccompanied children seeking protection through our Unaccompanied Refugee Minor program; and support healthy development and wellness of teens through mentoring, education, and our annual Youth Haven camp.

Q: What is it like working in a faith-based world right now?

A: LSSNCA was founded by Lutheran entities in 1917. Our mission was inspired by the Lutheran faith and our work is inclusive and expansive. We believe that through authentic connections and helping create community we can help foster resilience. So many people rely on places of worship as their trusted, or sacred community. We believe in bringing together multi-faith coalitions to create strong communities of welcome. Although we have Lutheran roots, you do not have to be Lutheran to work at the organization or be served by us. We welcome all!

Q: Can you tell me about your work in Michigan?

A: I served as the CEO of West Michigan Partnership for Children (WMPC), which is the administrator of foster care and adoption services in Kent County, Michigan, serving approximately 800 children in foster care at any given time. We developed an innovative model that leveraged partnerships with public and private organizations with rich expertise in child and family services, utilized data analytics to inform program and practice changes, and that ensured a strategic focus on advancing racial equity towards the goal of improving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children in foster care.

Q: What do you think about the current state that we are in? How has it impacted your work?

A: The Executive Orders and plans released by the Biden Administration in less than two weeks, to include rescinding of the travel ban, the repeal of the Remain in Mexico policy, safeguarding of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a zero tolerance policy for separating children from their families at the border, the 8-year path toward citizenship—all recognize the inherent dignity of our global brothers and sisters and our country's legacy as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution. These policies give me hope for a more welcoming America. Good policy is one thing. The next step is with us, regular people living in communities. It is up to us to be good neighbors and to welcome New Americans with open arms.

I am hopeful that the collective reckoning we are having as a nation over systemic racism and how its symptoms manifest in inequities for Black people and people of color, COVID-19 being a good example, inspires more Americans to be agents of change. Our nation's history of white supremacy is embedded in our culture and institutions. We need to face these truths with humility and open minds and hearts and ears. We need to be vigilant about identifying oppressive, racist, and nationalist policies and actions when we see them and countering them with love and justice. My hope is that there are enough Americans who will take action in the ways that are most true to them—through service, volunteerism, and advocacy towards a more welcoming America.

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We Need You Today!

Say Hello to Grace



Grace Bloxsom attended American University and received a BA in International Studies. She also studied abroad in Brussels where she interned for an European consulting firm. After undergrad, she spent time in Prague, where she received a Teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate. Grace later became involved in the state government, with roles in the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections and the Maryland General Assembly. She is currently working at a telecommunications company while attending the University of Baltimore as a graduate student. Grace is in her last semester studying Conflict and Negotiation Management.

Grace chose to intern for ISS-USA because she has a niche for researching and resolving complex conflicts. She looks forward to gaining experience in resolving real-world issues related to ISS-USA through her internship. When she is not in work or school, Grace is taking care of her two dogs, Indigo and Minnie. She continues her love of travel while her husband is in the Navy.

And Goodbye to Hannah



ISS-USA says farewell to Hannah as she opens the next chapter in her life. Hannah has been a Fund Development and Communications intern since May, and is now moving on to start her new Marketing Assistant position at SuperTech HVAC Services in Timonium, Maryland.

"It has been my pleasure to be a part of a meaningful mission and a passionate work family. My time as an intern has allowed me to build the professional and foundational skills I need to excel as I transition into my lifelong career in Communications. I am thankful for the mentorship of Julie, Marie, and Antinia and for allowing me the space to learn and grow under their generous guidance and feedback. I have worked with the most wonderful team: Ema, Claire, Grace, and Tera, where we were able to accomplish transformational campaigns that brought families together. I will forever be an advocate for ISS and for global families in need of cross-border services."

We appreciate Hannah's hard work and we are thrilled for her upcoming opportunities! If you would like to intern or volunteer with us, check our openings!

Help unite international families!



ISS-USA is seeking licensed social workers to work on a contractual, fee-for-service basis, providing home studies for international kinship and adoption placements.

[**Join the ISS-USA family today!**](#)

[**Click here to join our team!**](#)