

Let's Celebrate, Let's Remember, Let's Resolve Las Familias Solidarity's April 12th trip to the Border

Let's Celebrate

Most of the children arriving at the Annunciation House shelters, after being processed by Customs and Border Protection, wear the same emotions of fear, anxiety, and exhaustion. The volunteers have found that welcoming the families with a cup of hot chocolate helps the children feel safe. Neighborhood volunteers plan fun celebrations for the children, like an Easter Egg hunt, with a chocolate bunny for each child to enjoy. Other volunteers were planning to involve the children in planting an outdoor flower garden on Earth Day to celebrate nature. We can easily see the positive changes in the children that have been at these shelters for just a few days. They are laughing, running around the vast dormitory and playfully squirting the volunteers with vinegar as they help clean the meal tables.

Elisa, a shelter manager, got teary eyed as she received the 1,000 string backpacks that we had brought. "I see some people looking down on our asylum seeking guests when they are at the bus station or airport with their few supplies in a plastic bag. The adults are used to it, but the children feel bad about themselves. These backpacks will give them dignity." Yet we knew that all those backpacks would only last 2 weeks with the 500 asylum seekers that the Holy Family shelter helped each week.

Let's Remember

It is harder to lighten the heavy burdens of the adult asylum seekers. They are traumatized by past events and worried about their family's future. Many of the women at the Holy Family shelter had been locked up at the detention center in Juarez, Mexico when it was engulfed in flames. The 15 women were freed from their cell, but the guards left the men locked in their cell to perish in the fire. They were the husbands, friends and brothers of these women, who heard their screams.

On our visit this week, we were drawn to a large memorial in the front of the El Paso shelter, with 40 white doves, one for each man who died. A box held prayers written by the widows and other shelter guests. Drawings by children were in the background. So much love and sadness... Volunteer lawyers were at two of the Annunciation House shelters this week, helping the migrants fill out the cumbersome, confusing paperwork required by the Immigration Courts. We watched as one lawyer met with 10 asylum seekers from 6 countries, who spoke 4 different languages. We are inspired by the compassion, efforts and patience of so many shelter volunteers, helping these families have a brighter future!

Let's Resolve

There are also documented examples of mistreatment, abuse, neglect and violence against migrants at several Detention Facilities right here in the United States. Over a year ago, the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General called for the immediate removal of all people detained by ICE from the Torrance County Detention Facility in New Mexico. Since then, advocates and elected officials have joined people detained at Torrance and survivors of the facility in calling repeatedly for the prison to be closed, highlighting conditions even worse than those initially reported. Despite his purported commitment to addressing abuse in ICE Detention Facilities, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas has ignored the crisis at Torrance. Let's resolve to end the mistreatment and further trauma suffered by migrants in our own state. Let us keep pressure on Secretary Mayorkas to end the ICE detention contract with CoreCivic, the private for-profit company that runs the Torrance Detention Facility. Find out more at <https://innovationlawlab.org/blog/inaction-by-mayorkas-a-year-after-unprecedented-federal-alert/>

Let's Resolve.

The front line managers at the Annunciation House Shelter do not know what will happen after Title 42, which keeps the majority of Asylum Seekers waiting in Mexico, ends on May 11th. The government of city of El Paso is expecting a rapid increase over the 370 asylum seekers that Customs and Border Protection currently releases to the El Paso shelters each day. The Annunciation House shelters are working to provide each of their migrant guests with one change of underwear, socks, clothing, a backpack/duffel for their belongings, meals, a shower and supplies for their journey to meet their sponsors. Let's resolve to help supply what they need to do this.

An Annunciation Shelter manager sent all of you this thank you note *"Thank you for bringing items from our 'always need' list. It remains difficult to provide pull-on pants for men and women, underwear, and socks. Sometimes the refugees start their journeys with a little cash, but then they are robbed along the way by bandits, Mexican police, or even officials at detention centers. Most of our guests arrive with nothing but their worn-out shoes and the ragged clothes on their backs."*

Can you help us fill this "always needs" list from the Annunciation House shelters in El Paso? **Our next trip to the Annunciation House shelters is May 11th. Please have all donations dropped off by Sunday, May 7th.** Please understand that because of limited storage space in our vehicles and the shelters, these are the only items that we can accept.

- ☐ Athletic pants, men, small, medium
- ☐ Leggings, women's small and medium
- ☐ Men's boxers, new, small & medium
- ☐ Women's briefs, new, small & medium

- ☐ Ankle socks, new, men or women's
- ☐ Large Body Wash
- ☐ Large shampoo
- ☐ Laundry soap, liquid
- ☐ Backpacks, gently used

Your cash donation is especially appreciated because it allows us to buy in bulk, significantly lowering the price per item.

☐ **Donate & get a tax deduction - Go to all-angels.com.** (St. Michael and All Angel's parish) Hit the yellow donate button on the lower right corner of the web page. On the donations page, hit the arrow to the right of "Use this donation for." Scroll down to Las Familias Solidarity. Use PayPal or credit card to donate.

☐ **Send a Check, We Shop** – For a tax deduction, make check to St. Michaels and All Angels. In the memo line put "Las Familias Solidarity." Mail to St. Michaels & All Angels, 601 Montaña Rd. NW. ABQ, NM 87107 **or** make out & send to Liz Hanna, 2 San Juan Trail, Corrales, 87048.

☐ **Venmo** - @LasFamilias-Solidarity

☐ **Shop & Send** – Bring items to St. Michael & All Angels Parish, 601 Montaña Rd. NW, ABQ. Monday-Friday to parish office or Sunday Morning to church. Deliver or ship to Sharon Palma, 2 Isleta Trail, Corrales, NM 87048. If you drop off, please text Sharon at 505.249.5046

Thank you for helping us to provide support and compassion to the asylum seeking families!

The Las Familias Solidarity Team

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