

## NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS (including REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS and DREAMERS)

### WAYS TO HELP

**THE WORK OF BRSN:** For each family that comes here, we assign 2 volunteer Coordinators, who work together to assess the situation and to make sure that the family gets everything they need. Many of our 30+ families right now are Latino, but some are Arabic, some are African, and a few are Mayan (we have interpreters for all these languages right now, but can always use more Spanish speakers).

**THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS ARE:** Our clients are terrified and traumatized, and it takes them time to trust someone and talk to the person, so we have someone whom they know and trust make the introductions between them and our volunteers. The other problem is that they have bills, but cannot work until they get work authorization (which takes up to 8 weeks. If they work "under the table" -- for virtually no money -- it could ruin their application for asylee status, and they have no recourse except a deportation hearing).

### OTHER WAYS TO HELP

**DRIVERS:** To drive asylum seekers to local resource agencies --e.g., St. Vincent De Paul, Opportunity House, Goodwill, My Sister's Closet, food pantries, ESL classes, MCUM -- we would give the driver the names and addresses of resource sites. Also, we often drive asylum seekers and other immigrants to pro- and low- bono attorneys in Indy (Indiana Legal Services, Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic) or Chicago. In addition, if a member has a trusted contact in Chicago, sometimes that person hosts the client overnight and give the person a ride to the lawyer's office or the federal courthouse in Chicago.

**HOSTS:** Because our clients cannot work until they receive work authorization (up to 8 weeks), they often need a place to stay for one or two months. (Usually the time can be split up among hosts.)

**FRIENDS AND GUIDES:** Often people might simply need a friend to have over for tea. Or perhaps someone to familiarize them with the bus system, and the way grocery and other retail stores work. We get bicycles for them very economically at IU Surplus, but they need to know safe bicycling practices, as well as safe driving practices.

**CLOTHING AND OTHER DRIVES:** We sometimes hold winter clothing drives --(since our clients usually don't have sufficient winter coats, scarves, mittens). And sometimes Exodus in Indy asks us to start a drive for certain items for their refugees, so of course we do that, and then bring everything up to Indy. Because of all the supply agencies here, such as Opportunity House and Goodwill, and because we do not have storage space, we do not collect or store other clothes, household items, etc.

**MONETARY DONATIONS:** An important kind of help needed is donations for BRSN (Bloomington Refugee Support Network). We are a nonprofit 501c3 organization. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Monetary donations can be made out to BRSN and mailed to: 3101 E. Saint James Court, Bloomington, IN 47401, or through our website (using PayPal or credit card: [www.bloomingtonrefugees.com](http://www.bloomingtonrefugees.com)) .

We help the asylum seekers with phone bills, utility bills, and rent, until they receive their work authorization, and then with finding jobs and writing their resumes, attorney fees and application fees (which are rising higher than the cost of living), required medical tests, transportation to Indy and Chicago when needed for legal assistance or hearings, with drivers and interpreters for finding needed resources around town, and with friendship activities (such as baby showers, Come to the Table events, dances, and opportunities to tell their stories).