

FIELD GUIDE

FOR VOLUNTEERING OR GIVING TO LOCAL IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS

Saint Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church



Northwest Philadelphia residents, including members of Saint Martin's, demonstrated on Cheltenham Avenue in August 2025 to protest the detention of Anou Vongbandith, owner of a popular Germantown Café, who has been in the U.S. for more than four decades.

As U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) ramps up the campaign to detain and deport millions of immigrants who don't have permanent legal status, many non-profit organizations are stepping up to respond to the crisis. If you want to volunteer your time or make a donation to one of these groups, here is a short list of organizations that have been vetted by the Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Ministry at Saint Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church.

Volunteer opportunities run the gamut from accompanying asylum seekers to court hearings to offering a caring voice on the other end of the phone for an immigrant family living in temporary housing provided by the Sisters of Saint Joseph. If you want to donate, you can target an individual contribution to pay for such things as bail bond and legal representation, school supplies for immigrant children, or the delivery of groceries to immigrants who are afraid to go to ethnic grocery stores for fear they will be picked up by ICE.

Who are the immigrants these organizations serve? Many are the people who clean our homes and offices, wash our cars, tend to our yards, take care of our children and grandchildren, cook and serve our food at restaurants, stock our warehouses, harvest our Jersey tomatoes, and help build the new apartments and office buildings sprouting up in our neighborhoods. There are an estimated 14 million immigrants across the country who do not have permanent legal status, including some 50,000 living in Philadelphia. Many have overstayed their visas but been productive members of society for years. Others are awaiting asylum hearings after fleeing



Demonstration outside Das Good Cafe in Germantown last August to free Anou from detention.

persecution in their home countries. Yet others were granted temporary protection in the United States by the previous administration, only to have it canceled by the current administration. The majority of those who are detained for deportation have no criminal convictions.

In a commentary on July 3, 2025, The Rev. Sean W. Rowe, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, called on us to follow Jesus' command to love the stranger rather than the government's command to round up and deport the stranger without due process of law. "We are now being faced with a series of choices between the demands of the federal government and the teachings of Jesus, and that is no choice at all," the bishop wrote.

The following list of organizations is intended as a practical tool to help you find the right fit if you want to contribute your time, talent or money to supporting undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers in our area who are now living in constant fear of being picked up by ICE and deported. The list is far from comprehensive, but it is a start. A number of these groups belong to the Northwest Philadelphia Refugee and Immigrant Network, an information-sharing network that links local faith groups, including St. Martin's, to local non-profit organizations serving refugees and immigrants.

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New Sanctuary Movement

2601 Potter St.

Philadelphia, PA 19125

215-279-7060

www.sanctuaryphiladelphia.org

nsm@sanctuaryphiladelphia.org

Peter Pedemonti & Blanca Pacheco, co-directors

peter@sanctuaryphiladelphia.org

blanca@sanctuaryphiladelphia.org

New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia (NSM) is an interfaith organization representing more than 33 churches and synagogues that support immigrants who live in Philadelphia. It is immigrant-led and serves a largely undocumented population including immigrants from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, West Africa, East Asia and other areas



New Sanctuary demonstration outside Philadelphia ICE office in April 2025 when an ecumenical group of clergy built an altar on the sidewalk where immigrants await their ICE check-ins.

of the world. It engages in nonviolent direct action, advocates for legislation, raises money for legal representation, and provides companions for asylum seekers and others at court hearings.

It played an important role in Philadelphia becoming a sanctuary city that limits cooperation with ICE. It helped establish the city's special photo ID cards for undocumented immigrants. And it has led the statewide campaign for a proposed law that would permit undocumented immigrants in Pennsylvania to qualify for a special driver's license if they pass a required driving test. To monitor the arrest and detention of immigrants, NSM has organized a neighborhood-based network of volunteers to verify reports of ICE activity.

St. Martin-in-the-Fields is among NSM's member organizations. Others from Northwest Philadelphia include the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chestnut Hill, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Mishkan Shalom Synagogue, First United Methodist Church of Germantown, the Unitarian Society of Germantown, and Germantown Mennonite Church.

NSM welcomes volunteers to accompany immigrants to court hearings in Center City. Volunteers do not provide legal advice; rather, they simply stand with the immigrant to let the person know that they do not walk alone and to let the court know that the faith community is

watching. Volunteers are on-call for accompaniment on an as-needed basis. They typically work in pairs, with assignments on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Currently, more than 60 people serve as volunteer court companions. To become a court companion, you must complete a three-hour training in advance. Trainings are offered on a rolling basis when enough people sign up.

New Sanctuary also seeks volunteers to participate in what it calls ICE Watch. The program places volunteers on neighborhood watch teams that act as first responders when New Sanctuary gets reports of ICE activity in particular areas. Volunteers are on call to go to the scene and confirm whether ICE agents are present or not. If so, volunteers record basic information, such as the precise location, how many ICE agents are on site, and what they appear to be doing. Using an encrypted app on their cell phones, volunteers relay this information back to the NSM office. The Northwest Philadelphia team is led by Rabbi Linda Holtzman, organizer of the Tikkun Olam Chavurah community in Mt. Airy and the Rev. Jay Bergen, pastor of Germantown Mennonite Church.

To volunteer for these and other activities go to <https://bit.ly/volunteerwithnsm>, fill in your contact information and check the boxes of the particular volunteer activity that interests you. If you have questions, contact Tania Bonilla Mena, communications director, at tania@sanctuaryphiladelphia.org or 215-279-7060.

NSM also has a Community Legal Fund that provides legal representation and pays bail bond for immigrants facing deportation. Although legal representation greatly increases the chances of winning a case, most immigrants can't afford a lawyer. In Philadelphia, the cost of an immigration attorney ranges from \$5,000 to \$7,000. Since establishing the legal fund in 2018, NSM has raised \$363,000 in donations for the fund, which has financed legal costs for 58 people and paid bonds for 47 people. With arrests and detentions sharply increasing in Philadelphia, the need for legal representation is also growing. **To donate**, write a check to New Sanctuary Movement, with the note line marked "Legal Support," and mail to NSM at 2601 Potter St., Philadelphia, PA 19125.

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Newcomer Housing Alliance

6127 North 5th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19120
267-285-6769
<https://ssjnha.org>

Sister Eileen McNally, SSJ, Coordinator
emcnally@ssjphila.org

The Newcomer Housing Alliance is a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph (SSJ) that provides transitional housing for refugees and asylum seekers while they are waiting for work



Sisters of St. Joseph and friends rally for immigrants outside the Philadelphia ICE office in April 2025.

papers or looking for a job. The alliance also offers case management. As of August 2025, the alliance was covering the cost of rent and utilities for five families while also housing 15 single men in a former convent. The alliance is now renovating another convent to house a new program for women and children. Since its founding in 2017, the alliance has served more than 60 immigrants from 11 different countries

The alliance welcomes volunteers to help build meaningful relationships as immigrants adjust to life in a new country. This could involve something as simple as volunteering to call a family once a week to ask how they are doing and what they might need, such as a food run to the grocery store or to Staples to purchase school supplies, with

costs covered by the alliance. Volunteers are also invited to help immigrants practice their English in informal conversations. On Tuesdays, from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., volunteers work at the alliance's distribution center, sorting and organizing clothing, cooking utensils and other items to be distributed to immigrant households.

To volunteer, go to the alliance website at <https://ssjnha.org> and fill out the volunteer form. **To donate**, go to the donation link on the website.

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Asylum Pride House

3637 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
774-212-4804

www.asylumpridehouse.org

Victoria Sirois, Director

contact@asylumpridehouse.org

Asylum Pride House provides temporary, no-cost housing and support services in a five-bedroom apartment in West Philadelphia for recently arrived LGBTQ asylum seekers. Many of these immigrants have fled countries where gay or transgender people face widespread prejudice and discrimination in their own communities or where the government has criminalized homosexuality. Currently, 12 countries can impose the death penalty for same-sex relations.

Since 2022 when it was founded, Asylum Pride House has served gay and trans asylum seekers from China, Colombia, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Nigeria, Russia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela. Residents must be at least 18 years old and have a work permit or be in the process of getting a work permit, which is usually tied to a pending asylum application. Typically, residents stay until they can be self-sufficient, usually for six to 12 months.

In addition to housing, Asylum Pride House provides clothing, bedding, wellness supplies and a food bank. It also connects asylum seekers to legal representation through the American Immigration Council and makes referrals to ESL classes, career development, mental health professionals and other resources through its case management program.

The house welcomes donated supplies as new residents move into the house. These include items such as towels, razors, soap, hair brushes, plastic hangers and cleaning materials. Outside groups can organize a supply drive or use the online register to purchase needed items through an Amazon gift list at: <https://www.amazon.com/registries/gl/guest-view/1LVAU89ADYF3B>

Asylum Pride House also welcomes volunteers to help with its wellness program, which aims to promote physical and emotional wellbeing, community integration and personal empowerment. The program offers structured small-group activities that foster connection, healing, and joy. The activities include classes on movement, yoga, cooking, clay art and other topics as well as group excursions to the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Philadelphia Zoo, and other places.

Each year, Asylum Pride House sponsors a Welcome Walk to raise awareness and funding; a Wellness Fair with talks by medical experts and health and hygiene gift bags; and, during the holiday season, a Rainbow Ribbons Holiday Gift Drive.

To volunteer or donate, go to www.asylumpridehouse.org, then click on “Get Involved.” Make sure you sign up for the group’s newsletter, which provides advance notice of upcoming events.



Welcoming Homes

C/O Mishkan Shalom Synagogue

4101 Freeland Ave.

Philadelphia, PA 19128

<https://welcoming-homes.org>

Mindy Maslin, Director 267-968-3254

welcominghomes4u@gmail.com

Welcoming Homes matches refugee and asylum-seeking young adults with safe homes and caring families in the Philadelphia area. The asylum seekers are usually 18-year-olds who entered the United States as unaccompanied minors and qualify for special legal status that provides a pathway to a green card and legal residency. Typically, they come from U.S. government shelters that hold unaccompanied juvenile immigrants only until they are 18. If host families can't be found, these young people can be sent to adult detention centers and then deported.

The government's shelter system for unaccompanied juveniles has been widely criticized by immigrant advocates. The shelters are underfunded by the government and budget cuts are now leaving them with even fewer resources. Some shelters offer very little schooling; others offer none. Typically, immigrants arrive at host homes with some English. They can understand simple instructions, but cannot engage in more involved conversations. Welcoming Homes helps arrange for ESL instruction.

Welcoming Homes was incorporated as a non-profit in 2025 by Mindy Maslin and Sidney Ozer, a Germantown couple who, in previous years, had hosted several immigrants in their own home and discovered that it not only benefited the immigrants but also deepened their own lives. As members of Mishkan Shalom Synagogue, they saw hosting as part of their faith commitment to welcome the marginalized and vulnerable. As of August 2025, they had found host families for 11 young immigrants.

The youth are referred to Welcoming Homes by other immigration and social service agencies. Each youth has a case manager or pro-bono immigration attorney. Families must commit to hosting for at least six months and receive training in how to work with victims of trauma. Aside from matching hosts and immigrants, Welcoming Homes helps set expectations, house rules and responsibilities. It also helps meet the immigrant's need for clothing, transportation, medical care, ESL and other services.

To apply to a host family, go to <https://welcoming-homes.org>, click on “Join Us” on the top banner, then click “Host Application” in the drop-down menu. The application requires three references and background checks on all household members over the age of 18.

Welcoming Homes also invites volunteers to help on an as-needed basis to provide transportation to doctor appointments, sporting events and ethnic grocery stores; offer tutoring in English and other subjects; and serve as a “community buddy.” **To volunteer**, go to <https://welcoming-homes.org>, then “Join Us,” then “Volunteer Application” on the drop-down menu.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph Welcome Center

728 E. Allegheny Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19134

215- 634-1696

www.ssjoywelcomecenter.org

welcomecenter728@gmail.com

Olivia Sharkey, Executive Director

osharkey.wc@gmail.com

Maureen Cawley, Volunteer and Curriculum Coordinator

Mcauley.welcome@gmail.com

The Welcome Center, opened in 2003, is an education ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. It offers in-person and online English literacy and citizenship classes for adult immigrants including those who are legal residents and those who are on the pathway to legal residence and citizenship. The literacy classes, which range from beginning to advanced conversational English, emphasize speaking and listening skills about real-life situations such as taking the bus or enrolling a child in school. The citizenship classes help students prepare for the naturalization process and get them ready for the personal interview. Class topics include American history, civics, and geography. As of May 2025, the center had successfully shepherded 360 immigrants through the naturalization process to become citizens.

The population of learners shifts each year and draws from the immigrant population living in Northeast Philadelphia. Currently, it is 85 percent Spanish-speaking, with most immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Students sign up for one-hour classes two times a week. Before the Covid epidemic, classes were held in person at the center’s two buildings located in the city’s Kensington section. Today, many classes are taught via Zoom, with each class enrolling about eight students. The classes follow a well-developed ESL curriculum based on a textbook and a teacher’s manual. Teachers, who are not required to be Spanish-speakers, are all volunteers who agree to set aside two hours a week to teach an on-line class. Currently, 172

students are enrolled in literacy classes and 56 are taking citizenship classes. There are 46 volunteer teachers.

In addition to its education mission, the Welcome Center also helps students navigate the city's public and private education system, access medical care, obtain food, and find help with rent and household bills. It is authorized by the Department of Justice to offer pro-bono legal services and it assists with permanent-resident card renewals, adjustment of immigration status, and petitions for family members to legally enter the United States. The ministry is rooted in the mission of the Sisters of Saint Joseph which is "to live and work so that all may be united with God and one another," a call for unity that is articulated by Jesus in the Gospel of John.

To volunteer as a teacher in either the literacy or citizenship programs or take part in various outreach programs, email Maureen Cawley at Mcawley.welcome@gmail.com. Currently, there is a need for one-on-one tutors who would meet students online for two hours a week. **Donations** are the mainstay of the services that the Welcome Center provides. The center accepts monetary donations as well as donations in the form of trusts, services, in-kind goods and equipment. **To donate** go to www.ssjewelcomecenter.org and hit the "Donate" link on the top banner.

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Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity Project (PAIFUP)

www.paifup.org

Lilah R. Thompson, PAIFUP supervising attorney

lthompson@nscphila.org

215-609-1531



Lawyer and immigrant advocate Judith Bernstein-Baker at a We the People Wednesday demonstration at Richard Allen Lane train station in Mt. Airy.

The Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity Project (PAIFUP) is a collaborative of non-profit organizations aimed at providing legal representation for immigrants in Pennsylvania who can't afford private counsel and who face deportation proceedings. Representation is provided by a team of 13 immigration lawyers. They offer pro-bono counsel to immigrants picked up by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and detained at various immigrant holding centers including the 1,876-bed Moshannon Valley Processing Center in central Pennsylvania. The team follows the client from the beginning to the end of the case, often a long and grueling process over many months. It does not discriminate against clients whose cases will be difficult to win.

Launched in 2019, PAIFUP is Pennsylvania's first publicly-funded defense counsel project for detained immigrants. In the current fiscal year, the City of Philadelphia has budgeted \$950,000 for the project. The City of Pittsburgh also contributes. The project is also funded by contributions from foundations and private individuals. The money pays for all or part of the costs of the attorneys. Since its founding, the fund has screened more than 250 clients, represented more than 200, participated in 463 hearings, and gotten 134 clients released from detention. Currently, the supervising attorney for PAIFUP is Lilah R. Thompson, a lawyer at the Nationalities Service Center, a Philadelphia non-profit that serves refugees and asylum seekers.

To donate: Make out a check to Nationalities Service Center, 1216 Arch St., 4th floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107. On the notes line, specify the check is for PAIFUP, the Pennsylvania Immigrant Family United Project. On your envelope, write ATTN: Layanara Gonzalez. She is finance director at Nationalities Service Center.

Or, go to the Nationalities Service Center website at www.nscphila.org. Hit the blue **DONATE** box. You will see two options: Give Now and Other Ways to Give. Click on **Other Ways to Give**. On the drop-down list, click on **Fund for Immigrant Justice**. When filling out the donation form, specify your contribution is to go to PAIFUP.

Compiled by Huntly Collins and Lorie Simmons, September 2025.