

# LETTER TO THE CHURCHES

## Our Mission:

*TO WELCOME IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES BY PROVIDING FREE HIGH QUALITY IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.*



# Justice For Our Neighbors



A United Methodist Immigration Ministry

I O W A

Our staff members are Brynne Howard, attorney and a Church and Community Worker for the General Conference of the UMC; Ann Naffier attorney serving the eastern part of the state; April Palma attorney serving the unaccompanied minors project; Laura Mendoza legal aid for the

domestic violence/sexual assault project and our administrative assistant and legal aid Grisell Herrera.

We are a standing committee of the Conference Board of Global Ministries and the chairman is Frank Camp.

### Find a legal clinic:

Immigrants and refugees can make appointments by calling the office at 515-255-9809 on Mondays from 1-4 PM and on Fridays from 9AM-1 PM of the month BEFORE the legal clinic.

Free legal clinics are held monthly except June and December at United Methodist Churches here:

Lovely Lane UMC in Cedar Rapids.

First UMC in Columbus Junction.

Wesley UMC in Ottumwa

Grace UMC in Des Moines

First UMC in Decorah  
First UMC in Storm Lake

### WE ASSIST WITH A VARIETY OF IMMIGRATION BENEFITS SUCH AS

\* Asylum applications for those who fear returning to their country of birth.

\* NACARA for Central Americans.

\* SIJS-Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for unaccompanied minors finding a safe haven.

\* Family Petitions to unite families.

\* Adjustment of status.

\*Self-petition for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault through VAWA and U visa.

\*Citizenship applications.

\*DACA-Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals to offer the chance for higher education, legal work or service in the Armed Forces for youth brought as children to the U.S.

\*Renew work permits.

## OUR CLIENTS AND THEIR STORIES.

From April:  
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March of  
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Since the start of the program in 2015, Stacey\* is UAC to get all the way process and Legal Permanent Stacey is only 12 years old; she is from a very impoverished and dangerous region of Guatemala. Stacey's mother came to the United States back in 2005, fleeing domestic violence and trying to make a better life for herself and provide support for her daughter. Stacey stayed behind with her grandmother and was abandoned by her father as soon as her mother left for the US. Over the years the political and economic situation in Guatemala worsened and by 2014 Stacey was too scared to even go to school. In August of 2014, at only 10 years old, Stacey's mother and grandmother paid a coyote to transport her to the US. It was the first time Stacey had ever left her town and she was scared. The journey to the US was a long and terrifying one; she was surrounded by strangers and most nights slept on the floor in a room with 15-20 other people. Stacey remembers going to bed many nights hungry and cold. At one point during the journey her backpack with the few possessions she owned and the little money she brought was stolen. Luckily after 3 grueling weeks, Stacey arrived at our Southern Border physically unharmed. Stacey was detained at the border and transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). After spending a few weeks in an ORR shelter, Stacey was released to her mother in Ottumwa, IA. Her mother called Iowa JFON's UAC hotline in November of 2014 and after an initial screening was flagged as being eligible to apply for SIJS. The law firm of Harrison & Dietz-Kilen P.L.C. assisted with getting her guardianship order pro bono. Once the guardianship order was in place, I submitted an SIJS application which was approved. With Stacey's SIJS application approved I was able to terminate her deportation proceedings and assist her in applying for legal permanent residency. In December 2015 we found out that Stacey had been granted legal permanent residency and would be able to remain in the US safely. He mother and her were overjoyed and grateful for JFONs help.

From Ann: Omar\* is a mechanical engineer from Iraq, who worked closely with the U.S. army in Iraq throughout that last decade. He also worked with an international project specifically focusing on women's

economic rights in Iraq. From the beginning of his cooperation with the U.S. and the U.N., Omar and his wife and children faced threats and retaliation from elements in Iraqi society, but Omar strongly believed that he was working for the betterment of his country. However, as the situation became increasingly dangerous in Iraq, Omar applied for a special immigrant visa program specifically for Iraqis who had cooperated with the U.S., to re-settle his family, at least temporarily to the U.S. Because of U.S. national security background checks, however, Omar's application for a visa was delayed for years. When Omar was offered a student visa to the U.S. to pursue his doctorate instead, he took it. He and his family moved here temporarily, hoping that Iraq would be a safer place for them to return to when his studies ended. Unfortunately, the opposite happened. While the family scraped by on Omar's scholarship money at a university in Iowa, the terrorist group known as ISIS invaded the city where Omar and his family had lived, and ISIS continues to control that city. All of Omar's extended family there were forced to flee, and Omar's former home was destroyed by a bomb. That is when Omar contacted Iowa JFON to see if he would qualify for a permanent resident status in the United States. JFON assisted Omar is applying for asylum, but also in renewing his application for a special immigrant visa for Iraqis along with a waiver needed because of his student visa requirements. While Omar's asylum application is still pending, his special immigrant visa and waiver were approved, and he and his family are now on the road to their legal permanent residency in the United States.

Join us in creating brighter futures for families. Help us to give opportunities for safe, secure and peaceful homes for children and youth. By making a contribution to Justice for Our Neighbors you can be a part of an important ministry. You can send a contribution to  
Justice for Our Neighbors  
PO Box 41006 Des Moines IA 50311

Iowa Advance Special 0375  
THANK YOU!!!