

Letter to the Churches

Our Mission:

TO WELCOME IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES BY PROVIDING FREE HIGH QUALITY IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICE, EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY.



A New Role

Since joining JFON, attorney Brynne Howard has been a Church and Community Worker. This is the title of in-country missionaries employed in a shared role by the General Board of Global Ministries and the Iowa Annual Conference Board of Global Ministries. Starting July 1, Ms. Howard will become the Managing Attorney for a new project of JFON, funded by a

grant received July 1 from the VOCA or Victims of Crime Act.

The Personnel Committee is in conversation with the GBGM regarding options for a Church and Community Worker here in Iowa with Justice for Our Neighbors.

We are excited about having a the services of a proven leader like Ms. Howard as this new project is developed.

Find a legal clinic:

Immigrants and refugees can make an appointment by calling the office at 515.255.9809 on

Mondays from 1pm-4pm & Fridays from 9am-1pm .

FREE immigration legal clinics are monthly except June&December at United Methodist Churches:

*Lovely Lane UMC in Cedar Rapids

*First UMC in Columbus Junction

*Wesley UMC in Ottumwa

*First UMC in Decorah

*First UMC in Storm Lake

*Grace UMC-Des Moines

www.iaumc.org/jfon

Mailing address:

Justice for Our Neighbors

PO Box 41006

Des Moines IA 50311

STAFF:

Ann Naffier, Esquire

Brynne Howard, Esquire

April Palma, Esquire

Grisell Herrera, Legal Asst.

Laura Mendoza, DV

Project, Paralegal

A NEW PROJECT BEGINS JULY 1 AT JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

On May 6, 2016 the Crime Victim Assistance Board of the Department of Justice awarded a grant to Iowa Justice for Our Neighbors for three years through the Victims Services Support Program. The purpose of the grant is to provide immigration services to victims of crime. This will help us to fund on-going projects like our sexual assault and domestic violence work. It will also expand our

ability to help victims of human trafficking, both labor and sexual trafficking. These are some specific examples of crimes, but there will be other types for which we can help immigrant victims. Several new staff will be added with these funds. We thank Doug Bates, Brynne Howard, Amy Morris for hours of hard work writing this grant. We look for to continuing to provide more justice for neighbors!

CLIENT STORIES SHARED
BY OUR STAFF.

Carlos and Edwin's Story

Carlos* and Edwin* are cousins from El Salvador. They came to the US in July 2015. Back in El Salvador Carlos and Edwin were living together with Carlos's mother and step-father.

The boys made the dangerous journey to the US for several reasons. First, they came to the US to escape extreme levels of gang violence in El Salvador. Both boys were threatened by gangs; they were told "join or be killed". They had to drop out of school because it was too dangerous to be out of the house.

Additionally, Carlos fled the country because he no longer had a safe home. Carlos was abandoned by his biological father when he was very young and his mother remarried. For most of his life Carlos got along well with his stepfather, his stepfather was the only dad he ever had. However, in 2014 Carlos's stepfather began sexually abusing him.

The abuse occurred over a year, but at first was very rare and then began to occur more frequently. Carlos was afraid to say anything about the abuse because the stepdad's brother is in a gang and his stepfather threatened him saying if he told anyone he would be killed. His mother never discovered the abuse on her own because she worked during the day and Carlos's stepdad worked the night shift and was home during the day. The abuse started happening more frequently when Carlos had to drop out of school because of gang violence. Eventually, Carlos's little sister saw the abuse happening and told their mother. Carlos's mom didn't do anything about it and continued to

go on as if she didn't know. At that point Carlos and Edwin fled to the US. They are now reunited with Edwin's mother here Des Moines.

Edwin was abandoned by his biological father while his mother was still pregnant. Edwin's father is now dead so there is no chance of reunification and since Edwin's mother is here, he has no one in El Salvador to return to if he were deported.

I referred Carlos and Edwin to Iowa Legal Aid for guardianship orders. Once the guardianship orders are in place I will be assisting them in applying for the Special Immigration Juvenile Visa. Additionally, I will represent the boys in their removal proceedings. Our goal is to obtain their legal permanent residency so that they can remain in the US safely.

Liliana's Story

Liliana* came to Iowa Justice for Our Neighbors for help with naturalization. Liliana, originally a citizen of Mexico, had been a legal permanent resident for 5 years and was eligible to apply. As a young person who had recently graduated from high school in Pella with high grades and had never been in any kind of trouble, her case seemed very straightforward.

Iowa JFON assisted Liliana in completing and filing her naturalization application. On the day of her interview, Liliana attended the interview, confident in her ability to pass both the English and civics tests. During the interview, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer noted that Liliana had lived

in Puerto Rico during portions of the last five years. The officer told her that living "outside the U.S." for more than six months at a time could be a problem for naturalization and told Liliana that she would have to look into the issue.

Liliana left her interview feeling confused and discouraged. She had studied hard for the civics test and even remembered that there was a question on the civics test about Puerto Rico being a U.S. territory. She called Iowa JFON and we assured her that the officer shouldn't deny her application on that basis. A few days later, Liliana received a denial notice from USCIS stating that her application for naturalization had been denied because she had lived outside the U.S. – in Puerto Rico – during the last five years.

With the denial notice in hand, Iowa JFON was able to immediately contact USCIS officers. Bypassing a formal appeal – which would have cost Liliana more than \$600 and required her to wait for several months – we notified them of the obvious error and were able to convince them to reopen the case and approve it in just a few short days. Without the help of Iowa JFON, Liliana may have believed she was ineligible and may not have ever naturalized. Instead, Liliana is now a proud new U.S. citizen!

*All names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of our clients.

**THANK YOU TO
OUR CHURCHES
FOR MAKING
MISSION POSSIBLE**