

From: **Refugee Response Team**

Date: Wed, Jul 20, 2022 at 10:24 PM

Subject: RRT - Comprehensive Update~ Arriving Buses and Volunteer Opportunities

We have been sending updates with a lot of one-off asks and opportunities. After our conversation at the Refugee Response Team (RRT) meeting last week, I want to provide a comprehensive update about the buses arriving from Texas and Arizona and ideas on how to support this effort. Included will be specific ways you and your parish can get involved in small and large ways. Before I get into the buses,..

There is an immediate need from LSSNCA. Please pass it on to those who might be interested.

**IMMEDIATE NEED:** *One immediate opportunity is available with Lutheran Social Services for volunteers at Legal Clinics to help Afghan Allies apply for asylum. Volunteers with and without legal experience are needed immediately. The information is here: [Offer Pro Bono Legal Assistance \(lssnca.org\)](https://lssnca.org)*

## **CURRENT STATE - ARRIVING BUSES**

Since April, asylum seekers have been arriving at Union Station on buses from Texas and now Arizona sent by their governors. Many of those arriving are making their way to family or friends around the country; others have no connection and nowhere to go.

A coalition of local volunteers and organizations came together to raise funds to be able to provide transportation, temporary housing, phones, food, clothes, and support to people arriving with virtually nothing. There has been minimal publicity about this effort for a couple of reasons including a desire for safety for those arriving and not to bring attention to a political stunt. More publicity is happening because of the large volume of support needed and the publicity needed to get resources.

Local faith communities have provided respite centers for those arriving so they can have something to eat, rest, clean up, get clean clothes, and move to their next destination. The faith communities currently serving as physical respite centers on different days during the week include: Church of the Brethren/Hill Havurah, Friends Meeting of Washington, Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, Foundry United Methodist Church, Lutheran Church of the Reformation, New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, St. Thomas Parish, St. Stephen and the Incarnation, and Calvary. More locations are needed. This work requires incredible stamina, flexibility, and MANY hands and resources.

Buses are now coming to Montgomery County, MD under the work of the Faith Advisory Council of Montgomery County. Resources listed below may be used across both DC and MoCo.

DC Mayor Bowser has been under pressure to support/partner with this effort but has called this a federal issue. With the change in the immigration policies on the border, we anticipate the number of arriving folks and buses will continue to grow. The additional buses are arriving at varying times during the day and night which creates many challenges.

Here are some current articles and sermons about the situation.

○ [‘Unsustainable’: Resources Running Out for Migrants Bused to DC – NBC4 Washington \(nbcwashington.com\)](https://www.nbc4washington.com/news/immigration/2022/07/19/unsustainable-resources-running-out-for-migrants-bused-to-dc/)

- [Volunteers tell DC to help migrants bussed to DC with nothing | wusa9.com](#)
- [Volunteers housing migrants call on Bowser for help \(fox5dc.com\)](#)
- [D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser fired back at Trump. What about this stunt? - The Washington Post](#)
- [7.3.22 National Cathedral Sermon by Patrick Keyser - YouTube](#)
- Lisa Ahuja's sermon, July 3  
- [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=1085065585717371&t=1352](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1085065585717371&t=1352)

There are opportunities for parishes and individuals to support this effort because as we know, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." We are called to accompany our brothers, sisters, and siblings on their journey.

## **WAYS WE CAN SERVE**

PLEASE share these opportunities with your parish, interested individuals, and others who are called to this service! Please consider initiating a drive within your congregation or neighborhood.

### ***Money and Supplies:***

- **General fund:** Paypal (preferred) or Venmo @SanctuaryDMV with "TX/AZ Solidarity" in the memo
- **Housing fund:** Paypal (@peacehouseDC) or Venmo (@PeaceHDC) with "TX/AZSolidarity" in the memo
- **The solidarity chef fund:** Through the [Coops Support Texas Migrants \(givebutter.com\)](#) This is like a GoFundMe site to provide food and other resources..
- **Supplies for Migrant Aid DC:** [Shop for DC JWJ's Gift List \(myregistry.com\)](#)
- **Financial Donations for Montgomery County Migrant Help DMV:** [Fundraiser by Amy Nicole Blaszyk Hammond : Help Migrants Sent To Washington From Texas & AZ \(gofundme.com\)](#)
- **Supplies for MoCo Migrant Help DMV:** [Amazon Custom Gift List](#)
- **Airline miles:** Contact Michelle Dibblee at [michellempls@gmail.com](mailto:michellempls@gmail.com). This will allow people to be reunited with their loved ones.

### ***Donations of Goods:***

- **Clothing:** Many of those arriving only have the clothes on their backs. St. Thomas is gathering clothing such as NEW underwear and socks for men and women. Men's pants in excellent shape in sizes 26-34 with an inseam between 28-32 are especially needed. Most of those arriving are small physical stature. Women's clothing in excellent shape is needed,

again for women small in stature. Shoes for men and women sizes 6-8 are needed. You can connect with Carol Coonrod at [csoonrod@gmail.com](mailto:csoonrod@gmail.com) to make arrangements for dropping off clothing or having it sent. The clothing will be used at respite centers.

- **Bags** – totes with zippers, backpacks, etc. which will be used for carrying goods on buses and planes or to their next destination. You can connect with Carol Coonrod at [csoonrod@gmail.com](mailto:csoonrod@gmail.com) to make arrangements for dropping them off or having it sent.
- **Shoes** – There is a great need for new or gently-used shoes for men, women, and children. Shoes may be dropped off at The Outrage, 1811 14<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Washington, DC 20009 phone 202.885.9848. You can call 202.999.0293 for pick up.
- **Gently Used Clothing, shoes, baby carriers, and more:** Interfaith Montgomery is partnering with Goods for Good DC to do a massive clothing drive. You can find the locations and guidelines at [How You Can Help \(migranthehelpdmv.com\)](http://HowYouCanHelp(migranthehelpdmv.com)).

### ***Volunteer Opportunities:***

- **Help at Respite Centers:** Some respite centers have sign ups for serving on their days. Come prepared to learn, work and serve. You can sign up for St. Thomas Parish at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0a4ea8ae22a02-welcome>. You can sign up for New York Avenue Presbyterian Church at <https://m.signupgenius.com/#!/showSignUp/805054aacac2aa4fb6-immigrant>.
- **Respite Center support in Montgomery County:** Volunteers with a variety of capabilities, from translators to transportation, housing of all kinds, and open arms and hearts are needed. You can sign up here: [MigrantHelpDMV Action Form \(google.com\)](http://MigrantHelpDMVActionForm(google.com))

### ***Frequent Needs:***

- **Housing:** As more folks arrive and have nowhere to go, finding affordable housing is a challenge. There is constant need. As specific needs are identified, they will be included in the weekly Refugee Response Team updates.

For those on the Refugee Response Team address list, please share this information with your parish, community, neighborhood. As information is available, it will be shared in future updates. Please send me any updates to be shared with the RRT.

In Christ's love,

Nancy Stockbridge, Interim Chair