

May 2023 Immigration Work Report from James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation

The Immigrant and Refugee Rights Team (IRRT) of the James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation has been involved since October, 2022, in providing housing, meals, rides to medical and legal appointments and to English classes, social events and case management support services to three Nicaraguan asylum seekers and three Cuban asylum seekers. We helped one of the asylum seekers get his teenage son, whose life was being threatened in Nicaragua, to Madison and get him clothing, a bed and bedding as well as legal help on his asylum petition. We helped find two financial sponsors at Temple Beth El for two Cuban asylum seekers and temporary housing for another in the home of another JRUUC member. We helped get winter clothing for two asylum seekers and helped three of them get weekly groceries from an east side food pantry.

Since October, 2022, 8-10 JRUUC members, including two ESL teachers from our congregation, have helped provide English lessons, rides to frequent medical and legal appointments and ESL classes at the Literacy Network, meals, find monthly housing and meals in the homes of three of our own congregation members and several other DSC congregation members for a disabled asylum seeker who had broken both his legs and was dumped in a men's homeless shelter after several surgeries at UW Hospital. We also obtained donations to pay his phone bills and to cover his rent in a furnished sublet for March, when no volunteer housing hosts were available. He is about to move into the home of another JRUUC volunteer family for the month of May, and we plan to teach him how to drive and study for the tests to get a valid Wisconsin driver's license this summer. We will also help him apply in July for a work permit and Social Security number, which is a lengthy process, and will continue to help him move toward independence and financial self-sufficiency as he continues his physical therapy to heal from his accident.

In addition, in educational work an IRRT member spoke to the JRUUC congregation about volunteer opportunities and recent activities of the Dane Sanctuary Coalition and the Reeb IRRT on Sunday, January 29, 2023. We also invited Atty. Aissa Olivarez from the Community Immigration Law Center as a guest speaker to speak to our congregation about her work with asylum seekers on Sunday, October 16, 2022, followed by Q&A.

Leila Pine, Chair
JRUUC Immigrant and Refugee Rights Team