



February 22, 2023

## Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest

### - Review of 2022 Activities

#### Supporting Immigrants with dignity and compassion while in detention and upon release

Another year of shifting US immigration policies and COVID-19 infections has affected the number of detainees housed in and released from the Northwest ICE Processing Center here in Tacoma, Washington. We are aware that COVID infections continue to be prevalent, with pods periodically placed in quarantine. Presumably, that is the main reason that the detention center is operating at approximately one third of pre-pandemic capacity.

**Welcome Center:** AIDNW volunteers help only those detained immigrants judged by the immigration system to have the possibility of qualifying for US residency. The peak in number of immigrants released was in the summer and early fall—over 200 a month served from June through September, with the majority being from India and Peru. There was a brief surge in immigrants from Russia and Georgia. Surprisingly, very few immigrants from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Venezuela, who in the past have received special immigration treatment. To a certain extent, the countries of origin reflect the vagaries of global conditions and changes to immigration policy.

A few of the many interesting Welcome Center stories from 2022:

*Three of the Peruvian guests were brothers who were surprised and emotional to reunite at the NW Detention Center after having been separated in Arizona at the border three months earlier. Working with their brother in Virginia, we were able to secure early morning plane tickets for the next day.*

*A gentleman from Russia ...was met by two women who had arranged for his bond....He was one of two people they had worked to release—both had come by boat from Russia to Alaska to avoid the draft.*

And a recollection on her Welcome Center experience from a previously detained person who now works in the legal field in this country:

*I was released from detention in March [2016, after being]... detained for four months. I remember that it was a very cold day. .... I will never forget the weather that day, the sky was clear... but it was very cold. The GEO officers took us out and told us "You are free. Welcome to the USA". ... The GEO officer pointed to the AIDNW RV and told us that they would let us stay until our relative came. It was getting late and dark, it was really cold or my body was just reacting in a scared way. I had no shoes or socks, the only jeans I had moving from one detention center to another had ripped and I was wearing scratchy sweatpants that GEO gave me. And no coat to cover me from the intense cold. I remember that two beautiful and warm women received and welcomed us, and gave us coats, hats, gloves and socks. They made us hot chocolate and told us not to*

**Advocates for Immigrants in Detention NW** is a 501(c)(3) tax deductible, non-profit organization (27-1031009) that serves immigrants in detention and when released through welcoming services focused on transitional support and connection to vital resources for resettlement.

## Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest (AIDNW)

*be scared. The hug and hot chocolate were the best and warmest welcome I had ever received. I had a law degree in my home country...*

**Visitation Program:** In person visits are once again allowed, however frequent pod quarantines due to COVID-19 still occur. AIDNW volunteers also continue to support immigrants in detention through cards and letters, art supplies and books, and the occasional backpack with clothing and supplies for those who are being deported.

The AIDNW Board has increased the telephone communications credit program by 460%, yet the fund is still bumping up against the budget limit.

A special campaign, in cooperation with area faith-based organizations, raised funds to provide each detainee with commissary funds for the Christmas holiday.

All of these services help to alleviate the isolation experienced by the immigrants while in detention.

**Hospitality House Program:** Safe, temporary accommodations are offered to newly released immigrants that need a place to stay. The majority stay for only a day or so. A few stay for longer periods while arrangements are being made for more permanent housing. Food, toiletries, and clothing are available at the house.

**Post Detention Accompaniment Network (PDAN):** Volunteer drivers provide immigrant detainees with area transportation to the airport, bus station, train station and Hospitality House. Occasionally, an immigrant is overwhelmed by the airport check in process. PDAN volunteers have accompanied the immigrant from the airline check-in counter, through security and to the gate.

Here is one example of the important service these volunteers provide:

A young Ukrainian woman traveling with her cat was detained upon arrival at Sea-Tac airport. Upon release several days later, the AIDNW PDAN volunteer who was scheduled for that day, accompanied her to the airport to retrieve her cat, thankfully finding the cat well fed and with toys.

We are fortunate that we have been able to recruit the many dedicated volunteers it takes to support all of the AIDNW activities. To the extent possible, AIDNW continues to observe the necessary measures to ensure the safety of all. The immigration courts continue to operate, and the need for the services provided by AIDNW is still present.

New challenges will certainly pop-up in 2023. While we can't predict when the numbers of immigrant detainees will surge again, we know from experience that it can happen very quickly, and we need to maintain a state of readiness.

The continued financial support of individuals such as yourself is critical to the operation of AIDNW. AIDNW is financed 100% through donations from individuals and private organizations.

Thank you for your financial support.

Sincerely,



Timothy Chen  
Chair, AIDNW Board of Directors

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