



## **CASA GUADALUPANA Update**

### **August 2020**

Hope everyone is enjoying what is left of summer. At Casa, everyone has adjusted to the delays and uncertainty as to when their next asylum hearings will be scheduled.

For now, everyone continues to work or take the necessary steps to get their work permits. All remain healthy and diligent about wearing masks while out of the home – for jobs, medical appointments and trips to the store. Shortly after the arrival of the virus, some volunteers made and donated several masks. They have been part of our daily routine and give a sense of safety to everyone on a daily basis. Our great appreciation to individuals at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Community and Spirit of St. Stephens.

The Welcome the Stranger Group at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Community also recently organized, cooked, and started dropping off bi-weekly meals for the residents of Casa. On days following those meals most of the conversation at the house is focused on how delicious those home-cooked meals are. (Expression of thanks).

We wanted to let everyone know that we have been working on updating our website. Check it out at [www.casaguadalupana.org](http://www.casaguadalupana.org). We have added updates on our efforts, some background information on the context about the asylum process, and are working to add some new pictures. In addition, we have set up our donation page for those who would like to support us to keep this effort going for as many years as it is needed.

Below, we wanted to share with everyone the list of accomplishments included in a recent grant application. It gives an overview of the significant progress everyone has made over the last year and demonstrates the importance of a safe and secure shelter.

### **Accomplishments – 2019-2020**

#### **Immediate Needs of Individuals Living at Casa**

- Safety and stability for eight (8) individuals in for the twelve month period of March 1, 2019 through July 31,2020.
- Significant increase in transportation options – two residents have been able to utilize their earnings to acquire cars for transportation to employment; all residents were provided bicycles through a retired bike mechanic to enable them to get to appointments, classes and short shopping trips.
- During the shelter in place time in response to the Covid-19 virus, the individuals at Casa continued to move forward with their individual plans. One lost work hours, one gained new employment.
- Successfully dealt with two significant health issues – one individual has hip surgery, another reconstructive dental surgery – without any setback in their progress toward securing work permits, asylum and getting ready for permanent housing.

### **Moving Forward**

- One individual has successfully moved on to permanent housing.
- One individual has been granted asylum and is now waiting the required year to apply for his green card.
- Four individuals have steady employment and are beginning to save dollars for their move to permanent housing.
- The Welcome the Stranger Group with St. Joan of Arc Church in Minneapolis have organized bi-weekly meals for all residents of the house, working with each resident to prepare foods that they enjoy and have a partial taste of their home country favorites.
- All seven individuals currently living at Casa have expanded their community network of friends and supporters who celebrate holidays together and are providing guidance around a variety of issues, such as the various instruments for saving money and overall financial planning.

### **Work Permits/Jobs**

- Four individuals have now received their work permit and will be able to secure employment while continuing to progress through the asylum hearing process.
- The three other current residents are on track to have their work permits by November, 2020.

### **School – Fall 2020**

- One individual has been accepted and will start this fall on a Nursing Degree, beginning at Inver Hills Community College.
- One individual is applying for admission to the University of Minnesota in the fall of 2020 to complete one remaining semester of classes to achieve a Mechanical Engineering Degree. Anticipated graduation date and ceremony of December 2020.
- Three additional individuals are making plans for entering a university to complete degrees in Nursing and Information Technology.

### **Asylum Process**

- Each individual has pro bono attorney representation for the asylum process. Having an attorney improves the presentation of their case and increases the success rate of obtaining asylum to 35% from 3%.

### **Organizationally for Casa Guadalupe**

- Improved the capacity of the Board to represent Casa to the public, to secure volunteers, and to secure stable on-going funding.
- Grown our base of individual contributors, with plans to expand into sustaining supporters.
- Have grown our base of church congregation support, with an on-going effort to grow that base to 10-12 congregations that will make annual contributions.
- Progress being made to improve our webpage and to upgrade the appeal for financial support through GiveMN.
- Achieved stability in staffing. The house manager reached three full years with Casa and is currently committed to remaining in the position.