

IOSC Newsletter



Immigration Outreach Service Center **Volume 1 / Issue 6**

SAVOR THE WORLD 2021: THE IOSC: 20+ YEARS AND BEYOND

Savor the World is back! We are having an Open House on Monday, May 17th (rain date is May 24) from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm on High Topps outdoor deck in Lutherville and we hope to see you there. Included in your ticket cost of \$50.00 is free hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine, entertainment, and video stations to hear about IOSC journeys. A cash bar will be available for other drinks. Registration is required for attendance for the following time slots: 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm; 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm; or 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm. All Covid precautions will be in effect, so please wear your mask and practice social distancing. We look forward to a wonderful evening with all of you. Please watch your mail, email, or our website at www.ioscbaltimore.org for registration information.

Covid-19 Vaccination

In the past few months we worked with Medstar Good Samaritan Hospital and Shepherd's Clinic for a special Covid-19 Vaccination Clinic. Shepherd's Clinic hosted the event and vaccinated over 65 individuals from the immigrant community. We extend a big thank you to all who assisted and participated in this wonderful work for health equity.

Virtual Resource Fair

Our Daily Bread Employment Center, Immigration Outreach Service Center, and St Matthew hosted a Virtual Resource Fair on Wednesday, March 31st. Joining us for the event were several organizations providing resources to those in need to include: Baltimore City Community Action Partnership, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Turn-Around Tuesday, Episcopal Refugee and Immigrant Coalition Alliance (ERICA), Esperanza Center, Medstar Health, Shepherd's Clinic, Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Our Daily Bread Benefits Enrollment, Our Daily Bread Information and Resource, Our Daily Bread Employment Center, Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland, Refugee and Immigrant Support for Empowerment (RISE), World Relief Immigration Services.

Three members of the community volunteered their time to provide translation services to attendees in French, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Portuguese, and Spanish as needed. Thank you for sharing your gifts.

Several individuals received a wonderful opportunity to meet with the various community based organizations to meet their needs, discover resources available, and connect with one another.

We are planning a Virtual Career Fair in the near future. We look forward to working with the wonderful team of Our Daily Bread Employment Center to create an opportunity for job seekers to meet with potential employers.

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Beyond the Borders Tutoring, A Personal Perspective from Sr. Mary Bernadette Hilmer

English is not an easy language to grasp, it is a challenging endeavor. However, children are usually gifted in learning by listening and imitation.

I have been amazed at the young children who attend the Beyond the Borders Tutoring Program of the IOSC (Immigration Outreach Service Center) at St. Matthew Church in Baltimore, Maryland. Our parish community is made up of 45 nationalities and is located in an African American neighborhood. The office of IOSC is located in the Rectory of the parish, next to the Church.

It has been a wonderful opportunity to work with other tutors: teachers, retired ones, College and High School students, etc. At present, there are 26 tutors and 51 children from Pre-K to High School. The sessions run on Saturday afternoons from 12 noon to 3:00pm. Due to the Pandemic, all of the sessions are now online. The students are online in most of the schools and so they are acquainted with this method.

Prior to the Pandemic, we held classes in the rectory and used all the rooms and corridors available. When we go back to in person learning, we will use the offices of IOSC, renovated for this purpose as well as rooms in the rectory. We are in the process of transferring the materials and books to the assigned rooms.

The atmosphere is friendly and professional at the same time. The parents are very grateful for the extra help their children receive in the subjects that are most challenging for them. English is a second or third or fourth language for some of the children. All of the sessions are only in English and this helps them to practice and learn more quickly. There is contact with the schools they attend and their teachers when possible.

There is a van from one of the other parishes that offers transportation to some of the students. The driver is also a tutor and works in the IOSC. The other students are accompanied by their parents.

The program is sponsored through grants from organizations that assist immigrants and refugees. The parish is very generous in offering other necessities to the families of the students. The IOSC also offers ESOL classes, computer literacy, financial literacy, mentoring and referral services.

The experience of working with such a variety of tutors and students has added to my appreciation of all those who offer their time and talents for others. The family spirit helps the parents and students to adjust to the American culture while continuing to value their original ones.

These past two years I have worked with five children in the 2nd and 3rd grades in various public schools in the vicinity. They range from different countries in Africa and some have parents who are African Americans.

One of my students came last year from Burkina Faso and knew very little English, as well as her little brother. Both of them now speak fluent English. It is a real joy to see the improvement as the months go by.

The IOSC helps the parents wade through the documentation for the refugees and immigrants. I would say that the assistance given to the families is holistic, mind, body and spirit. They also have a variety of religious backgrounds. There is a great respect for their heritage and beliefs. In this way, the children learn to treat one another as they wish to be treated.

The children have an abundance of resources that can aid them in learning all of the subjects. I often think about the children whom I taught in Northern Sudan and Kenya. The environment and material available certainly increase the rate of learning. I believe that education is one of the most important areas to promote when opening a new place. Learning to read will open up the world to the children.

I am grateful to be tutoring in the context of the IOSC here in Baltimore. As I realized in Africa, I have been adopted again by those who seek my help. We are all learners wherever we go and in whatever we do.

TEACH A PERSON TO FISH AND HE/SHE WILL FISH FOR HIMSELF/HERSELF

**We thank Sr. Mary Bernadette Hilmer for her permission to share this article from the
Comboni Missionary Sisters' Newsletter.**