

IOSC Newsletter



Immigration Outreach Service Center

Welcome 2022!

A Message From Our Founder

I have been the Chaplain at Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) for about 6 months. During this time, I am slowly meeting students and faculty to get to know them and the spirit of the University Campus. I have also told them about my previous experience at St. Matthew and the Immigration Outreach Service Center. There are some students looking for opportunities to work with immigrant children as a part of their service-learning projects. I am hoping to get them to join the IOSC tutoring program. There is also a faculty group called the Global Solidarity Committee that has three main interests: Human Trafficking, Immigration, and Water Accessibility. This year, because of the work of IOSC, they want to add a fourth area of interest which is finding a way to connect with the newly arrived Afghan refugees. So, it seems that my relationship with the IOSC, and my current ministry as the Chaplain at NDMU, may be beneficial to both institutions. I am looking forward to developing these relationships on a deeper level to support current immigrant families in America and those who will soon be new arrivals on this land. God is guiding this journey and I am glad to be a part of it. The IOSC continues to do great work in helping people struggling to find a new home in a new land. I ask you to continue to pray for safe journeys and peaceful resolutions.

Fr. Joe Muth, Founder

Immigration Legal Clinic



The immigration legal consultation program has started and IOSC has been able to help many families and individuals who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to find out what legal options were available. Some clients found out what steps they can take right now in the immigration process for themselves or their family members, and others found out why their cases were still processing and what were the next steps. At this time, it is difficult to obtain an immigration consultation in Baltimore without having to wait for an appointment, so the Wednesday walk-in clinic has been a great help to our clients. Please note that there will not be any consultations on January 12th and February 23rd.

The Legal Clinic will be held on Wednesdays in the IOSC office on a first come-first serve basis. We ask that those attending the Legal Clinic arrive between 9:30 am to 10:30 am. Our consultation fee is \$80.00. Virtual consultation appointments will be scheduled as needed. Please contact Mary Ritter at 410-323-8564 or mary@ioscbaltimore.org for further information.

Patricia Chiriboga-Roby, Immigration Attorney

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Beyond the Borders Tutoring

Due to the current COVID situation we are continuing to provide tutoring via Zoom on Saturdays between 12:00 and 3:00pm. Our veteran tutoring team has been joined by students from Calvert Hall College High School and Loyola University of Maryland.

Thank You to Our Christmas Angels

The **Students of Calvert Hall College High School** adopt-a-family for Christmas program provided 40 families with gift cards to make their Christmas even brighter.

The **Knights of Columbus** provided 39 of the students in the tutoring program with winter coats that were distributed along with a hot meal to the students and their families.

The **University of Maryland Labor and Delivery Nurses** bought hats, gloves, arts and crafts gifts for the pre-k through upper elementary students and Amazon gift cards for the middle and high school students.

If you are feeling called to tutor a child in math skills, reading comprehension, and occasional special school projects, please contact Elaine Crawford at Elaine@ioscbaltimore.org. In order to keep our children safe, all tutors are required to complete a background check through Virtus. *Elaine Crawford, Tutoring Coordinator*

Mindful Tutoring

As the IOSC is nearing the two-year anniversary of its online tutoring program, some of you already know that I have been quick to say that this is not what I signed up for. I am not particularly strong in the area of technology and I have frequently found myself asking what I have to offer through this venue -- especially when I am paired with a student who appears to be functioning above grade-level in math and reading. My student is now a first-grader and also has no major school projects or homework assignments to work on.

It recently occurred to me that maybe I could apply some of what I've been learning in the area of mindfulness to our tutoring sessions. If I saw our weekly meetings as opportunities to practice being in the moment, investigating topics using as many of our senses as possible, just being curious together without too much emphasis on accomplishing an outcome -- could something come of this? I am happy to say that to date we've both gained a lot from our sessions together using this approach.

Thanks to the "ABC Mouse" online program we have engaged in many enrichment activities, not traditional tutoring per se, that have taken us from our side of the world to the sled dogs of Alaska, Hawaii volcanoes and the far reaches of the solar system. In the process, my student and I have developed a relationship that has fostered increased participation and self-confidence on her part. She asks and answers more questions than she used to and is comfortable offering her opinion at times. I hope that she sees herself as a unique individual with many strengths, besides being a rather quiet middle child in a large immigrant family.

I have certainly made gains myself also, in my quest to remain a life-long learner. In retrospect, I probably would not have signed up to do online tutoring, if not for the current national health crisis, but I'm glad that I did.

Mindfully submitted, Kathy Nichols, Tutor

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Afghanistan Refugee Connections

Saint Matthew and Blessed Sacrament parishes along with IOSC have been working with Catholic Charities for the last few months preparing to welcome the Afghan family. Catholic Charities is working with the team of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) of Baltimore. We are one of five leads of volunteers that will help the Afghan family settle in Baltimore. We have so far nine volunteers. As of last Tuesday, Catholic Charities asked everyone involved in this project to remain patient until the refugee families get here in February or March.

We continue to ask everyone who is planning to donate small or big items to hold onto them until the Afghan families get here.

We welcome financial assistance and please donate at <https://www.ioscbaltimore.org/donate/> or send your check to: Immigration Outreach Service Center, 5401 Loch Raven Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21239.
Nathalie Piraino, Afghan Resettlement Coordinator

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

In August, Cynthia asked if I was interested in tutoring someone in English and I met H for the first time at a picnic table outside the rectory. I'm retired and thought one of the ways I could make a contribution was to tutor someone in English. We've met weekly at the rectory until recently when we moved our sessions to the Towson library, so H doesn't need to use her car.

I'd taken a course years ago in teaching ESL but remembered little. Cynthia gave me a book – but it was geared to teaching groups of students. In the past five months, H and I have developed an effective format for our weekly two-hour sessions. We talk, and I can correct pronunciation and use of words. Using a Pre-GED manual I had, she reads and answers questions about the content, and we review definitions of words she did not know. Her skills are good in speaking and reading. Several times she has brought something to our sessions that she has written – that is where she has the greatest opportunity for improvement, and we plan to do more of this. Writing is a more difficult skill to self-learn. Her classroom learning of English was years ago, in Morocco, and, I think, her reading and speaking skills are largely self-taught in her time living and working in this country. I'm reviewing grammar books trying to find a good approach to verb tenses and other grammar issues and we will add grammar to our weekly format.

I enjoy our sessions and expect them to continue for quite a while. I highly recommend ESL tutoring to others who are retired and looking for a way to contribute. *Ruth Crystal, ESOL Instructor*

Computer Literacy

Seven students recently completed the beginner Computer Literacy class held this fall. The 10-week course is conducted largely online via Zoom and is taught by Fred Trenkle and Véronique Ayivi-Blibo. The students learn how to use software applications such as Google Docs (which is similar to Microsoft Word), Gmail, Google Drive and Google Calendar, in addition to some real-world technical skills such as how to search for information online, how to find and apply for a job and how to compose a resume using word processing software. Students are supplied with a Chromebook for the class and, provided that they attend class and complete homework assignments, they are able to keep their machine to use as their home computer.

Fred Trenkle, Computer Literacy Instructor

Financial Literacy

I would say that the last two almost three years working with the IOSC and bringing the Financial Literacy Program to life has been quite a fulfilling journey. We have met several people from the immigrant community who were clueless about how money works in the adopted home of the USA and are now active participants in their financial growth. Knowledge is Power but we say Applied Knowledge is Powerful. We are gratified to see members of the class apply the lessons we teach them in real life. We surely look forward to the program growing in leaps and bounds and for this new year we hope to graduate several students but also involve those who have graduated to actively participate and grow this great program. We thank the IOSC and St. Matthews church for giving us this platform and we shall continue to serve the community through it to the best of our ability. *Cliff Okoth & Francois Ntchombou, Financial Literacy Instructors*