

June 13, 2019

DALLAS RESPONDS

This memo provides a brief update on “Dallas Responds”, the humanitarian volunteer initiative of the North Texas multi-faith clergy community convened as Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square.

We have been alerted by Ruben Garcia, Director of Annunciation House in El Paso, that there will not be a bus sent to Dallas Responds on Saturday, June 15th as earlier projected. According to Mr. Garcia, releases of asylum seekers have fallen from over 1000 per day in April, to less than 400 in recent days, a number that Annunciation House is equipped to accommodate in El Paso. As of now, we have no visibility into what the needs will be in the future. The team at Dallas Responds plans to continue to develop the organization, processes and resources necessary to assure the initiative is ready to quickly restart operations if and when the need resurfaces.

For those that would like to make a financial contribution, please navigate to www.thanksgiving.org/dallasresponds/ . If there is a preference to donate by check, checks should be made payable to The Thanks-Giving Foundation, with a notation “Dallas Responds”, and mailed to:

The Thanks-Giving Foundation
PO Box 131770
Dallas, TX 75313

For those that would like to donate goods or services, a brief email should be sent to dallasresponds@gmail.com .

For those that would like to volunteer, a brief email should be sent to dallasresponds@gmail.com .

Additional information will be provided as it is available by Dallas Responds spokespersons, Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, and Kyle Ogden, President and CEO of The Thanks-Giving Foundation.

June 11, 2019

DALLAS RESPONDS

This memo provides a brief update on “Dallas Responds”, the humanitarian volunteer initiative of the North Texas multi-faith clergy community convened as Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square.

At roughly 8:30pm on Saturday, June 8th, a chartered bus from Deming, New Mexico carrying 57 visitors arrived at Oak Lawn United Methodist Church. The group was

greeted by at least an equal number of volunteers. After one of Oak Lawn Methodist's Spanish speaking pastors boarded the bus and offered an emotional welcome, the guests entered the respite center and began the intake process. On Wednesday, June 12th, the last two families will leave, and the volunteer initiative, Dallas Responds, will take stock of the first completed cycle of care and assistance for asylum seekers as they pass through our city in route to join their US sponsors.

A recap follows;

- 57 individuals cared for
- 25 families of mother and child, father and child, or mother, father and child
- 23 families originating from Guatemala, 1 family from Honduras, 1 family from Venezuela
- 15 individuals treated at the clinic the first evening, comprised of 11 children and 4 adults
- Illnesses treated included strep, flu and pneumonia
- 14 families left on the first day (Sunday)
- 6 families left on the second day (Monday)
- 3 families left on the third day (Tuesday)
- 2 families left on the fourth day (Wednesday)
- Families left to join sponsors in CA (2), GA (2), LA (1), AL (4), TN (1), OR (2), RI (1), VA (2), FL (1), NY (1), MI (1), NC (1), AR (1), UT (1), MS (1) and other major cities in TX (Austin, Houston, Pasadena)
- 14 families departed by bus
- 9 families departed by air
- 2 families departed by car

Acknowledgements;

- A small but determined volunteer leadership team invested hundreds of hours planning for success
- Roughly 300 volunteers pulled together over four days, working on site and as transportation providers to our guests
- Oak Lawn United Methodist Church's leadership, staff and congregation were magnificent
- The Agape Clinic set up and staffed an onsite clinic and provided expert medical care
- Mental health professionals were embedded and provided consultations
- Hundreds of donors provided food, goods and financial contributions
- Verizon provided cell phones and walkie-talkies for use by the volunteer team
- The City of Dallas worked with the local hotel association to provide donated hotel rooms for our guests

Dallas Responds wants to express it's gratitude to the many people and institutions that participated by volunteering for and donating to this humanitarian effort. Through the community's selfless contribution of time and resources, for these few days and for these 57 souls, Dallas truly showed itself as the welcoming city it aspires to be.

Dallas Responds expects to welcome its second bus of asylum seekers on Saturday, June 15th.

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June 6, 2019

DALLAS RESPONDS

This memo provides a brief update on “Dallas Responds”, the humanitarian volunteer initiative of the North Texas multi-faith clergy community convened as Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square.

Working with our partners in El Paso, a plan has been developed that calls for Dallas to receive its initial bus carrying approximately 55 asylum seekers, all families of either mother and child or father and child, on Saturday, June 8th. We will not be receiving any single men or women, nor any unaccompanied minors. It has been determined that our guests will be provided comfort, care, meals, minor health services, and assistance in arranging transport to their sponsors during daytime hours at Oak Lawn United Methodist Church. The families will be transported by volunteers each evening to several area hotels, and likewise shuttled back to Oak Lawn United Methodist Church each morning. We will not be releasing the names of the hotels providing shelter during this phase of the program, but we are indebted to each of them for their generosity. It is our hope that we can provide some public acknowledgement after our work is completed.

Our volunteers are planning diligently for a positive and welcoming experience for our visitors. We will not be allowing identifying photography of our guests, and will make every effort to manage the media presence in a way that reduces the fear, trauma and

anxiety in our guests. We are not yet sure what this means procedurally, but will work through the details in the next couple of days. We will have security on site at all times to help us manage the overall experience.

We have seen an amazingly enthusiastic and positive response from the community to Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square's outreach to assist the asylum seekers! There are many that have offered assistance, and for that we are extremely grateful. As you might imagine, we must be planful so as to manage the project complexity. Therefore, we have developed a process for engagement as follows;

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June 4, 2019

DALLAS RESPONDS

Dallas is being called to join other cities like San Antonio, Phoenix, and Denver to help our border cities handle the overwhelming influx of legal asylum seekers by acting as intake and respite centers, compassionate caregivers, and expeditors/facilitators of their travel. In response to requests from Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins and the Dallas Office of Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs, Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square, a collaborative convening of many of the area's multi-faith clergy, has brought together the volunteer resources necessary to respond to this call. There are countless volunteers who are preparing to provide these human beings with, in addition to their basic needs, the communication and transit assistance necessary to enable them to connect and reunite with their sponsors throughout the U.S.

Asylum-seeking individuals and families are detained in US-Mexico border cities as they are vetted by ICE, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security. Once they

receive security clearances, and a legitimate U.S. “sponsor” is identified, they are released from detention and typically dropped off at local respite shelters or at bus stations. The individual or family must secure their own transit to their sponsor and keep a scheduled asylum court hearing date in the U.S. city where their sponsor lives.

In a number of U.S. border cities, non-profit, community-based organizations (CBOs) exist to support the transitional needs of newly released asylum-seeking migrant individuals and families. It is a common occurrence that people are released by ICE, only to find that the timeline for leaving the border city is delayed 24 to 48 hours. For many migrants, the CBO’s “hospitality services” are the only thing separating them from a 2 to 3 day period of homelessness and vulnerability in a bus station (or worse), while they await their scheduled departure. There are a variety of services provided by the various CBOs, but most include overnight accommodations, daytime shelter, and access to food, showers, clean clothes, and limited health care services.

The compelling issue is that the recent increase in transient asylum-seeking migrant individuals and families has overwhelmed the robust migrant support CBOs offer along the US-Mexico border. One of these organizations, Annunciation House of El Paso, reported receiving over 1000 people a day during the month of April. As a consequence, their leadership recently asked the City and leaders from the Dallas-based faith community for assistance. The basic plan would include Annunciation House identifying 100 recently-released asylum-seeking migrants for transfer to Dallas each week to receive “hospitality services” while they await their scheduled travel to their sponsor’s city. Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square, under the auspices of The Thanks-Giving Foundation, is currently in the process of securing both daytime and overnight space to support this population of people. As part of their planning, Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square is working with County Judge Clay Jenkins’ office, as well as the City’s Office of Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs, for input and strategic planning support.

The North Texas volunteer team, dubbed “Dallas Responds”, is preparing to receive the first guests within the next week. At this early stage, only daytime hosting is planned at the respite facility, with the guests being transported to separate sheltering facilities for their overnight stay. It is expected that many will be shuttled to bus terminals or airports within a day of their arrival. Stays of over two nights are expected to be rare, as these weary travelers will be quite anxious to connect with their sponsors. Dallas Responds is not prepared to release any details currently about the locations of the respite and sheltering facilities being considered.

And finally... while the debate in Texas and the nation continues over how best to reform complex immigration policies, the humanitarian crisis is real and urgent! Dallas Responds professes no singular political or religious ideology, but is rather driven by the need to show caring, compassionate love to all humankind. Our hope is that the community will join us in support of this work as we strive to make a positive difference in the lives of the people we touch.

Additional information will be provided as it is available by Dallas Responds spokespersons, Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, and Kyle Ogden, President and CEO of The Thanks-Giving Foundation.