



For Immediate Release:

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Albuquerque Interfaith Leaders Key in Addressing High Profile Local Challenges

Impact includes Central American refugee humanitarian response, saving School-Based Health Centers, churches confronting root causes of homelessness, and neighborhood character preservation

Albuquerque, NM, Saturday April 27, 2019 – After focusing its 100+ member rapid response team (16 local churches and schools) upon the 2019 New Mexico State Legislative Session, Albuquerque Interfaith (an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, founded in 1940, and the oldest / largest organizing network in the United States), now pivots its organizing back to achieving meaningful wins via the Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Directors, the City of Albuquerque, and the County of Bernalillo. The organization's current core organizing efforts are as follows:

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: For several months now, Albuquerque Interfaith has organized an operation of hundreds of volunteers who are helping welcome thousands of legal refugees/asylees into the United States by accepting buses of mostly Central American families into the city. Here, they are greeted with compassionate sleeping accommodations, healthy meals, fresh clothing, and support to get to their final destinations (in most cases, the East Coast). Most have completed a multi-month journey through Mexico and would otherwise be dropped off in the streets of El Paso by U.S. Border Patrol. With the help of dozens of churches and organizations pitching in to the Albuquerque operation, most of the refugees/asylees make their transition from Albuquerque within 3-4 days. As AI volunteer coordinator Eleanor Milroy stated in an April 15th, 2019 [Albuquerque Journal article](#) about the crisis response, "...when they leave, they're showered, they've had a good night's sleep, they're in fresh clothes, I mean it's totally different from the minute they get off the bus, I mean you wouldn't believe the transformation." Contact: Eleanor Milroy, [REDACTED] ejmilroy@aol.com.

AI leaders are also striving to bring a "justice" response to the crisis and will be advocating at the May 6th 5:00PM Albuquerque City Council meeting in favor of a \$250,000 appropriation to the operation. In recent weeks they have also met with U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich, U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland, and many county/city elected officials with the goal of achieving a 21st century working immigration/refugee re-settlement system over the long haul.

SCHOOL BASED HEALTH CENTERS: An April 24th, 2019 [KUNM 89.9FM story](#) profiled the plight of the school based health center of one of Albuquerque Interfaith's school partners, Robert F. Kennedy Charter School in Albuquerque's South valley. In a year when the State of New Mexico's budget surplus topped \$1 billion and nearly half a billion dollars in new funding was invested in public education, funding for school-based health centers was inadvertently undercut and various school-based health centers are now at risk of closure in the coming months. As profiled in the KUNM story, these 14 centers provide vital community health services in Albuquerque, including mental health therapy, teen pregnancy prevention, and a myriad of preventative medical services.

As a result, Albuquerque Interfaith leaders are meeting with City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County elected officials to identify \$250,000 in gap funding until the state legislature can return to the matter in 2020. In another public education related matter, Albuquerque Interfaith leaders will