



## UIDN UPDATE: Early Spring 2020

### YES, YOU CAN HELP...

*Dear Ulster Friends and Neighbors,*

### THE WHOLE WORLD HAS CHANGED

Our immigrant friends are more vulnerable and stressed than ever before.

Since our last update, COVID-19 has upended assumptions everywhere. Just two months ago, UIDN volunteers were meeting immigrant community needs with face-to-face activities: Transportation to critical legal and judicial appointments, after-school programs, “Know Your Rights” and DMV clinics, Domestic Support’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Giveaway program, and fundraising activities. Now, such in-person meetings and services are shut down despite the fact that severe unemployment has hit the local immigrant community, and their overcrowded living conditions have made them more likely to pass the coronavirus, one to the other.

### SO, WHAT IS THERE FOR AN IMMIGRANT DEFENSE NETWORK TO DO?

Plenty! **Social distancing** right now is good for everybody’s health but only if we can pair it with **emotional connections** and **moral responses**.

And, here is what we are up to so far:

### LEARNING WHAT WE CAN; SHARING WHAT WE LEARN

UIDN is fortunately well situated to identify our friends’ needs and report them to government agencies as well as to ensure that families know about resources that are available to them. To that end, we are developing an Emergency Directory of Resources to be used by UIDN’s Helpline volunteers as they begin ongoing needs assessments: Our bilingual Helpline volunteers, along with others, are calling our immigrant friends to see how they’re faring, to ask about the most pressing/emerging needs that they are unable to meet on their own, and to share vital COVID-19 and health information. This effort includes outreach to Spanish speakers as well to as a large group of local families from Guatemala, whose native language is Q’eqchi’.

**PLEASE NOTE:** We have a continuing need for Spanish- and Q’eqchi’-speaking volunteers. To become involved, please contact Helaine, [helainemeisler@yahoo.com](mailto:helainemeisler@yahoo.com).

Thankfully, all of our work is greatly aided by affiliate congregations, partner non-profit agencies, and many public-school teachers, who took it upon themselves to stay in touch with their students and to deliver food and information to their families. We salute them!

What we learn from all of these connections helps us shape our efforts to directly help our friends. It also gives other Ulster County community partners usable and reliable information to ensure that immigrants are included in our County's response to COVID-19.

## **SUPPLYING NECESSITIES WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING**

However, simply knowing what our friends need is not enough. So, in these times, UIDN remains committed, within our means, to finding and providing for human needs; this means creating new ways to deliver services.

More than ever, our friends need help getting food. Some families pick up emergency meals at existing distribution centers and at sites set up by the County – UIDN is helping those families and the distribution centers find each other. In addition, we are also directly providing food to over 100 families – food they need, and food they can cook at home, but food that is in stores too far away from their homes to easily reach.

UIDN volunteers have created a new COVID-19 safe initiative for this purpose:

## **SHOP AND DELIVER**

We are asking for volunteers to partner with a family in need by doing a parallel shopping twice a month when they do their own shopping. We provide a reimbursable shopping list of needed food for one week. The volunteers add those items to their shopping baskets; deliver them to the family's front door; and text the family that their packages have arrived. In this way, UIDN volunteers and our friends honor social distancing. To be reimbursed, they send receipt(s) to UIDN at Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church 30 Pine Grove Avenue, Kingston, NY 12401.

To date, more than 65 volunteers have stepped forward as shoppers at-a-social-distance! And, many of our affiliate congregations have responded to this call, buying (and preparing) food and purchasing personal hygiene items for UIDN volunteers to deliver. *Thank you!*

Another way to serve is to purchase (in-person or online) needed personal hygiene items: Enfamil baby formula 0-12 months, sanitary napkins, shampoo, bar soap, toothpaste, rubbing alcohol, and the very hard-to-find toilet paper! If you would like to help in this way, please contact Leslie, [lilacless2@yahoo.com](mailto:lilacless2@yahoo.com), to receive a reimbursable shopping list and to coordinate your schedules re the day/time for dropping off these items at Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church.

**PLEASE NOTE: UIDN needs additional Shop-and-Deliver volunteers to reach waiting families as well as volunteers to help with the purchase of reimbursable personal hygiene items. If you are interested, contact Leslie, [lilacless2@yahoo.com](mailto:lilacless2@yahoo.com). Please share this 'ask' with your family, friends, and colleagues.**

## ADVOCATING WITH COUNTY LEADERS AND SCHOOLS

Project Resilience, an Ulster County initiative, delivers ready-to-heat meals every other day to those in need. And, each weekday, at selected sites, schools provide school lunches to their students. UIDN makes such projects known to the immigrant community and helps them fill out application forms.

We are currently working with school boards, administrators, and teachers to support their efforts so immigrant families can access emergency resources: food, financial support, and vital information about COVID-19 and healthcare. In addition, as schools begin to use distance learning to reach their homebound students, we are exploring how to ensure that it reaches those immigrant households that have limited access to the internet and computers.

UIDN monitors public agencies/businesses to get early notice of what may help or harm the immigrant community in this moment. This covers everything from urging Spectrum not to cut off families that can't pay their bills, to reminding state and federal officials that the recent recovery bills provide scant help to many laid-off immigrants. We don't want a flood of homelessness when the governor's 90-day delay in rent payments is up, and tenants face a 3-month debt after receiving no income.

## ONE BIG THREAT

In Orange County, NY, as well as in other detention centers around the country, ICE has detained many immigrants, pending the outcome of their immigration cases. These immigrants have NOT been charged with any crime – yet, now, as court and immigration cases are indefinitely suspended, the normally slow process has ground to a halt.

In response to this horrific situation, and to prevent a massive spread of COVID-19 in the Detention Center, UIDN joined other regional groups to demand the immediate release of these detainees. On Sunday, March 29, UIDN participated in a highly successful, COVID-19-safe, stay-in-your-car protest and drive-around at the Orange County Correctional Facility in Goshen, NY.

## ALL THINGS CONSIDERED...

In this challenging time, dedicated volunteers, old and new, shifted gears and found new ways to meet our mission. Donors, too, have stepped up. This is essential, because UIDN's January–March emergency grants to families have more than doubled for food, and more than tripled for rent support.

So far, so good: We are meeting the challenge of social distancing while preserving emotional connection and moral response. But even bigger tests may lie ahead. We want to be ready, and we welcome your feedback.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP: All of UIDN is powered by volunteers

- **Share what you know (including this UPDATE):**  
To let us know about emerging needs and/or resources we have not yet included on our website, contact Helaine, [helainemeisler@yahoo.com](mailto:helainemeisler@yahoo.com).
- **Volunteer:**

- If you'd like to partner with a family in our Shop-and-Deliver initiative and/or if you'd like to shop and deliver personal items to Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church, contact Leslie, [lilacless2@yahoo.com](mailto:lilacless2@yahoo.com), who will share UIDN's reimbursable shopping lists with you.
  - If you are a fluent speaker of Spanish and/or Q'eqchi', contact Helaine, [helainemeisler@yahoo.com](mailto:helainemeisler@yahoo.com).
  - If you have other volunteer interests, contact Helaine, [helainemeisler@yahoo.com](mailto:helainemeisler@yahoo.com).
- **Make a Donation:**

The monthly cost of our emergency grants for food and rent has nearly tripled since January.

    - We welcome specific food goods for our pantry; contact Leslie, [lilacless2@yahoo.com](mailto:lilacless2@yahoo.com).
    - Financial donations are greatly needed and appreciated right now.
      - Donate online at: <https://ulsterimmigrantdefensenetwork.org/donate/>
      - Make checks out to "Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Church;" write "UIDN" in the memo; and mail checks to: Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church 30 Pine Grove Ave. Kingston, NY 12401.

From the bottom our hearts, thanks for all you do!

And, please, do all you can to stay safe and healthy.

From,

All of us at UIDN