

Social Justice Action

“What one does is what counts. Not what one had the intention of doing.” Pablo Picasso

UUCSW Service Project

Social Justice FAMILY Event – TODAY

When – Sunday March 1, 12:00 – 12:30 PM

Where – In our very own church kitchen.

What – Pack meals. We will be packing meals for people in a homeless shelter in Worcester. *There will be jobs for all ages.* We deliver 100 meals on Sunday and they are handed out the next two days.

A story about the reality of the US immigration policy.

Recently your editor was working with a volunteer group on a wildlife refuge in Arizona. Our task was to remove barbed wire left when the land was ranched. This then allows the antelope to run from predators without getting snagged.

We were staying in a lodge. It's about half an hour up a very rough canyon road. Requires four-wheel drive vehicles. When we returned from work on Tuesday, we found a woman huddled on the doorstep of the lodge. We'll call her Maria. She had paid \$14,000 to a coyote to get her into the U.S. Somehow the coyote had dropped her off; she was separated from her group while going across the mountains. She was on our doorstep far from anywhere.

It seems that Maria lives in Kansas. Her husband and her three children are all US citizens. Two years ago, she was apprehended because of a routine traffic accident. She was deported at that time. Since then Maria has made one unsuccessful attempt to get into the U.S.

What were we to do? One of our group drove down to the highway in order to get phone reception. She found out from an immigration refugee service that we could give Maria food and

shelter, but we were not allowed to help her on her journey. That refugee service needed to operate strictly within the law and could not provide other assistance.

We were many miles from the border but there are constantly border patrol vehicles, helicopters, sensing devices and other electronics all along this route. This area is a common path, through the valley and through the mountains, for people crossing the border. One of the main obstacles for someone driving on the road is a border patrol checkpoint where all vehicles are stopped and “friendly questions” are asked to ensure the occupants are legal. To pass through that border patrol point with an undocumented occupant is certainly illegal. But it IS legal to pick up a hitchhiker, once past that checkpoint, and transport her along the route that you are traveling!

The next day, here's what happened. Somehow “magically” Maria found herself on the other side of the checkpoint, perhaps 30 miles further on. It is, of course, unknown how that could possibly happen!

Then one of our party drove her, picking her up as a hitchhiker, on that farther side of the border patrol station, toward Kansas where her family met her. I'm told that there were tears all around.

What kind of immigration policy deports someone who has been in this country for 20 years? Who has a family here, who has a productive job? It makes no sense.

What would you have done in this situation? Would you have illegally crossed the border patrol checkpoint? Would you have taken Maria to her family?

Jerry Breecher is your editor.
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