

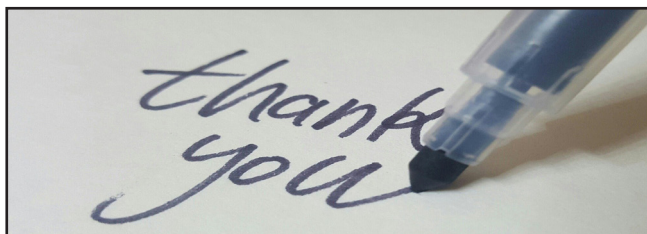
PHJC Volunteers

Make a difference with heart!

www.phjcvolprogram.org

April 2020

Donor Generosity Supports PHJC Volunteer Program Needs



The mission of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Volunteer Program is to offer baptized Christian women unique opportunities in a faith-based context to live out their Baptismal call to share God's presence in the world. Volunteers are inspired by openness to the Spirit, simplicity, community, and dignity and respect for all.

Volunteers share the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ mission, vision and core values as they live and partner alongside Sisters and co-workers in domestic and international ministries that champion the poor, the disenfranchised, and Earth. Volunteers commit to service for a time period of up to 12 months. Sharing a spirit of mutuality and shared leadership, volunteers grow in their discernment toward service.

We thank our amazing donors who helped us raise \$3,510.00!!!

Jean Chelenza: An Instrument of Compassion and Love

Meet Jean Chelenza, a retired civil servant of 30 years as a motor fleet manager with the Federal Aviation Administration. Jean took care of her husband of 35 years for his last six years following a diagnosis of terminal cancer. She has also been a regular volunteer with her church and in her community for nearly 50 years. She has a special affinity for the poor and wanted to fulfill her dream of serving children in Africa.

Jean states that serving the poor all these years has made her a better person. She has served with St. Vincent DePaul, St. Veronica's Guild, Birth Choice, and the Salvation Army. She was also the founder of the Martha and Mary Guild. Jean volunteers at her church serving funeral dinners, giving rides to church, makes crafts to sell for the church, rescuing food from restaurants and sharing it with the poor. Jean currently volunteers at Assisi Heights and visits her dear friend, Sr. Marcella Klein regularly. She has a son, Brian, who is 49 years old.

Jean shared that her desire is to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ using her talents, skills, abilities and treasure to do all she can to make things better for the poor.



Volunteer Jean Chelenza volunteered in Kenya with PHJC ministries in December 2019.

Jean hails from Rochester, MN and chose to volunteer in Kenya for three weeks in December! During her time in Kenya, Jean was grateful for seeing the dedication of all the sisters to their ministries and was overwhelmed at the great poverty and many needs she saw. She was especially pleased to visit, learn about and see A Caring Place. Jean was moved by stories of Sr. Germaine's founding of this ministry. Jean also enjoyed her "mini-safari" through the animal and nature conservancy.

We thank Jean for her gift of time, energy and love for the children as well as her generous donation made to the sister's ministries in Kenya! We pray that God continues to use her as an instrument to share compassion and love with the poor!

Willy Perez: A Humble Giant

Since July of 2019, Willy Perez has been a mainstay and giant in service to the immigrant families and asylum seekers in the tent city of Matamoros, TX. Willy oversees volunteers going into Matamoros from the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, working with Sr. Norma Pimentel, Missionaries of Jesus, who is the Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

Together with many other agencies and persons with compassionate, caring hearts, Willy and so many volunteer groups who come to the Humanitarian Respite Center have responded to the needs of people as a social mission of the Church by offering time, talents and treasures to assist as much as possible to countless refugees in distress.

Willy has seen it all in the tent city of Matamoros. Everyone knows him, including many of the border patrol, which makes it easier for him to get in and out of the country with food, blankets, hygiene and baby products, tents, air mattress, pots for cooking, socks, shoes, hats, gloves, etc.

Case after case, people are being sent back to their own countries, many of whom are killed or returned to areas of gang violence illustrating the human toll of dehumanizing and immoral legislative policies. The United States and Mexico are both unprepared to handle the numbers of those seeking asylum or the unforeseen consequences, including cartel-sponsored kidnapping and respiratory illnesses.

Life has not changed in the woods at the base of the international bridge in Matamoros. Many retired, middle-aged and young adult persons come and serve at the respite center and walk over following Willy in a caravan of collapsible wagons filled to the brim with milk, bread and rolls, oil, beans, rice, masa, sugar, salt, coffee, oatmeal bought in bulk and placed in smaller baggies. Those in the camp come running to form a line when they see Willy coming with his caravan. Matamoros remains one of the most insecure and dangerous places.

People wash their clothes and bathe in the Rio Bravo, as they call it on the Mexican side. A few showers, water tanks with water that still has to be boiled, port-a-potties, make-shift sinks and a very small camper have been brought in to help at least a little. The camper from Global Response Management - a Florida-based nonprofit clinic - is a small medical unit where a retired couple from Brownsville crosses the border each day to join a Cuban asylum seeker doctor volunteering along with other nurses who come in and out for days or weeks at a time.

Sure, there are many volunteers who come and go. But Willy is a giant because now in these days of the coronavirus when everyone is staying home, he still packs up his "beast," an old SUV, and daily does the hour and twenty minute ride to Brownsville, and single-handedly unloads, and walks across the international bridge. He sets up his tables and unloads whatever he has gathered to give away that day! He has a heart for the people, and this will never be forgotten by those he has served or those who have served alongside this humble giant!



Above: Willie Perez works with volunteer groups to help immigrant families.

Below: Van packed with much needed supplies.



ACTION

We invite you to pray with us for our government to:

- Repair our broken immigration system, including a pathway to citizenship that is fair for the undocumented.
- Protect the family unit.
- Utilize alternatives to detention and increase safety and health measures for migrants.
- Uphold the legal rights of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Respect border communities around the world.
- Identify, collaborate with other governments and address the root causes of migration around the globe.
- Petition to reunite detained children and families.
- Petition to provide protection, testing, and treatment for COVID-19.



PHJC Sisters and Co-workers volunteering at the border in March 2020. Thank you for the support.

COVID-19 Impacts PHJC Volunteer Program

Cancellations through April:

12 Wisconsin Badger Volunteers

90 Bishop Noll Seniors for Service Retreat

Volunteer, Amy Wallace (returnee from El Paso for Donaldson, Chicago, East Chicago and Gary)

Volunteer, Cristy Contreras (returnee from Houston for Donaldson Chicago, East Chicago and Gary)

For information about the PHJC Volunteer Program, please email Sr. Connie Bach at cbach@poorhandmaids.org



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