



Huge Thanks to Holy Innocents!

Blog posted July 12, 2016 by Alice Kenny

Teaming with Catholic Charities to Help Refugees



With Father Burns are Elda Lambert-Fernandez and her daughter– who are originally from Honduras.

A huge thank you to Holy Innocents Parish and its Pleasantville parishioners who, with a relatively small goal - to help a few local refugee families -- worked with us at Catholic Charities to make a huge difference in their lives! They collected hundreds of donations, ranging from Cinderella books to furniture, gift cards, appliances and more to help families who fled persecution in their homelands get back on their feet here in their new homes.

Spurred by televised visions of refugees' desperate flights, reacting to televised xenophobic rants, inspired by Pope Francis' encouragement, and fed up with feeling powerless, parishes like Holy Innocents and local community groups are reaching out to Catholic Charities to help.

Catholic Charities is dedicated to helping refugees and other victims who must flee their countries to escape violence and persecution. This complicated, comprehensive work often involves fragile survivors.

So Kelly Agnew-Barajas, Catholic Charities Director of Refugee Resettlement, matched four refugee families in particular need with the Pleasantville parishioners. Two of the families escaped from Honduras where gangs, murders and violence rule local streets. One family escaped Burma's military regime. And one Gambian family of eight was finally safely reunited in the United States after continents, persecution and poverty separated them for seven years.

Kelly contacted these families – already served by our Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Department – to find out their specific needs. And their needs, it turns out, were many, everything from sheets, towels, and toiletries to furniture, fans and appliances.

Some would see this as a “wish list.” But for the parishioners, it became not only a shopping list but a “To Do” list. They even bought the families store gift cards to make sure they got exactly what they needed. They coordinated pickups and deliveries. And they made these families, once overwhelmed and alone, feel cared for in their new homeland.

In short, they followed Pope Francis' guidance:

“Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity,” Pope Francis says. “They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having but above all for being more.”

