

# News 2018

## JFON - Kalamazoo



Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) is a ministry of hospitality that welcomes immigrants by providing free, quality immigration legal services. JFON-Kalamazoo opened late 2015 at First United Methodist Church and is a satellite of JFON-Michigan.

## Dreams coming true - Transitions

Late last year, we dreamed that we could transition to a full-time attorney.

With promises of support from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and a three-year commitment by the Dick Knapp Fund we were able to make that move. We also anticipated the merger of all JFON work in Michigan under a new umbrella, JFON-Michigan, a 501-c3 entity, which would employ all paid staff and manage our finances. Locally, we still must raise the money to operate JFON-Kalamazoo.

Of our staff at the end of 2017, legal assistant Aita Wellington, graduated from WMU and sought full-time employment. She is now employed by the YWCA. Our half-time attorney, Katrina Pradelski, wanted to simplify her life and, after a break, has become a full-time attorney with Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC). To continue our mission of

assisting immigrants in Southwest Michigan, we are now joined by a well-qualified, full-time attorney, Kathy Purnell and a half-time assistant, Coral Cervantes.

We couldn't be happier to have been able to hire Kathy Purnell, in particular. Kathy has lived in Kalamazoo for some time, having taught at WMU in the Political Science Department and in the School of Public Affairs and Administration.

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Left to right: Grand Rapids attorney, Alex Gillett, newly hired Kathy Purnell with Raquel Owens, director of West Michigan JFON.

(continued from page 1) Kathy Purnell's immigration and public interest law experience has been developed through positions with many organizations including Legal Aid of Western Michigan, the ACLU (served as a nationally funded Immigrant Detention Fellow), The National Immigrant Justice Center, the DePaul University's Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic and the law firm of Carpenter and Capt. She is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and the Kalamazoo County Bar Association. She teaches graduate courses in Administrative Law and Nonprofit Governance in Western Michigan University's MPA program. She also worked at WMU as research attorney for a number of years and for a time as University service-learning coordinator. All of this points to her broad interests and ability to work with a wide range of people.

Coral Cervantes has previous experience with a non-profit organization in Los Angeles County that provides immigration services. A graduate of Kalamazoo College, Coral is now a graduate student at WMU in the Department of Comparative Religion. With her skills and her drive to address the current state of immigrant communities in Michigan, she is a perfect fit for JFON! [\(return\)](#)

## Work goes on while staff gets switched

During the time that we lacked our own attorney, JFON West Michigan stepped in and kept us going. With help of Alex Gillett, most cases were serviced. A few were transferred to Michigan Rights Center (MIRC). During this time, Alex estimates that she worked on 110 cases for about 100 clients. Those include refugee adjustments of status, family petitions, unaccompanied minor cases (like SIJS, asylum, removal), citizenship, and U Visas. Among those served was the Syrian family who are being sponsored by First Presbyterian Church. [\(return\)](#)

## Pop-up rally supports #FamiliesBelongTogether



News about the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security's "zero tolerance" policy and the resulting immigrant family separations sparked outrage and protests around the country in June. (continued, next page)

(continued from previous page) This issue felt close to home, since thirty detained mothers are being held not far from the JFON Kalamazoo office in the Calhoun County Jail's ICE detention center in Battle Creek. Thanks to the organizing efforts of JFON Kalamazoo's Clinic Coordinator, Ann Sweany, a pop-up protest against family separation was held in front of the jail on Wednesday, June 20th. After just 4 days' notice, there was an unprecedented amount of attention and support for the event. According to the best estimate, over 200 people from Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and surrounding areas showed up to chant, sing songs, and hoist homemade signs in protest of family separation.

First United Methodist's Facebook post about the protest was shared almost 300 times and local news stations provided coverage leading up to and during the event. Many of the signs directly supported the thirty mothers, displaying messages like "We see you, Mothers," and "I Need My Mommy and So Do They."



The protest lasted from noon until 1 p.m.; towards the end, the protestors learned Trump had just announced to revise his policy and end family separation. Many were also excited to learn about JFON's work, and some offered to volunteer with the clinic. Several Battle Creek locals also expressed their thanks that a group based out of Kalamazoo had taken initiative to seek change in their community. More photos and information about the protest are available on Channel 3's website and First United Methodist Church's Facebook page. [\(return\)](#)

### **News from the Border – A Story of Welcome**

The PBS show, Frontline, broadcast a program on July 31, 2018 regarding the separation of families at the border. At the time of this writing, the program was still available for viewing at <https://www.pbs.org/video/separated-children-at-the-border-abt8su/>. It describes the lives of two families whose children were separated from their mothers at the border for 38 days. Juana Baluch reported that she was asked why she had come to the United States, no one wanted them. She, too, wondered why she had come. After a California judge had ordered the government to reunite families, the children were released from detention. Concerned persons like yourselves provided bail for the mothers and drove them to New York City from Arizona to be reunited with the children. It was obvious to Ms. Baluch that the claim, "no one wants you here" was patently untrue. This is why JFON exists: compassionate, respectful assistance with our broken immigration system. While we assist people in the system as it stands, we advocate for changes in the law and always pray. We are not alone – other agencies and we share in this effort. [\(return\)](#)

## Now is the time to come to the aid of immigrants

- Indigent immigrants are not guaranteed an attorney supported by the courts. The courts that hear immigrant cases are administrative courts, not criminal courts, where they would receive the help of public defenders.
- Immigrants who attempt to be their own counsel are less likely to present their petitions successfully.
- JFON charges nothing for its assistance to immigrants who cannot afford private counsel. In some cases, we even provide assistance for the filing fees that the federal government charges for procedures.
- With a full time attorney and a part-time legal assistant plus other necessary expenses we must raise nearly \$115,000 every year.
- We are blessed by support for our work by major funding agencies and churches that have given us approximately 70% of our income so far this year to meet our 2018 operating budget.

Thus, we appeal to you. Consider making a sustaining gift by giving periodically in a predictable fashion, so that we can reasonably assume your continuing support. It's a win-win type of support. Win #1 - When you communicate your intentions, JFON Kalamazoo will know approximately what is the income stream for planning purposes. You can adjust or stop your support at any time. Win #2 - By making monthly contributions, you will find it easier to make a larger gift than you may be able to afford to make in one gift.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Can we contact you by email? \_\_\_\_\_

Wishing to give periodically \$ \_\_\_\_\_ every month quarter year(circle one)  Giving this once \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Write checks to First United Methodist Church, 211 S. Park St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. Use memo line for "JFON"

**Online donations at [www.umc-kzo.org/online](http://www.umc-kzo.org/online)**

Persons seeking services should call, as services are offered by appointment, only.

Phone: (269) 743-2501.

Read more about JFON at [www.umc-kzo.org/JFON](http://www.umc-kzo.org/JFON), [www.JFONMI.org](http://www.JFONMI.org) and at [www.njfon.org](http://www.njfon.org). ([return](#))