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## HEARTS WIDE-OPEN

*"If we love one another, God remains in us." (1 John 4:12)*

Dear friends and partners,

As always, we at **Caminando Juntos** (*Walking Together*) thank you for supporting our mission to live out the Gospel mandate to *love one another* and to *welcome the stranger*. In our ministry and in our daily lives, we are challenged to follow in the footsteps of Christ, whose light inspires us to open up our hearts to the most vulnerable. This letter invites you to share in the ways our hearts were "opened wide" this year as we walk with new Latino immigrants.



### OPENING OUR HEARTS TO UNACCOMPANIED MINORS



**In August of 2018**, we opened our hearts to a desperate mother seeking help in being reunited with her two Honduran children, unaccompanied minors held in a Texas shelter. We knew from television reports and news articles that unaccompanied minors were fleeing their home countries out of fear (gang violence, extortion, and poverty), but we never anticipated that these families and children would be knocking on our door! Nor did we anticipate the deep connection we'd form with their families, as we heard their stories and felt their pain. Family after family arrived on our doorstep, requesting our accompaniment to one extent or another. Since the fall of 2018, *Caminando Juntos* has helped to reunite twelve families, some separated at the border, and some unaccompanied

minors, forever changing our lives and theirs.

**This was just the beginning!** Need after need followed: advocating for children in Texas shelters made possible through a partnership with a Texas non-profit; assisting families with follow-up paper work; searching for immigration attorneys to assist with asylum cases, etc.

### OPENING OUR HEARTS THROUGH "WARM A NEIGHBOR"

**Over the winter months**, *Caminando Juntos* partnered for the 5<sup>th</sup> year with *HyVee*, *Coffea Roasterie*, and *Life 96.5* to share over 500 warm winter items (hats, gloves, scarves, socks) with our Latino neighbors. Many of the families we serve are relocating from other states or countries and are under-prepared for the harsh weather conditions in S.D. Through the generous donations of community partners and others like you, we have warmed our neighbors this winter and warmed their hearts, as well!



## OPENING OUR HEARTS AMIDST IMMIGRATION POLICY CHANGES



Sister Janet Horstman, our Department of Justice Accredited Representative, continues to open her heart to the Latino families who want to adjust their immigration status, petition for a family member from a Central American country, or apply for U.S. citizenship. Immigration policies are changing by the day, and yet Sister Janet continues to respond to the unending human desire to be reunited with their families and to have legal status in this country.

## OPENING UP OUR HEARTS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

There is a general desire on the part of our Latinos to fully participate in society. They know that the English language will help them achieve that goal. This program would not be possible without the generosity of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, the enthusiasm of Augustana University volunteers, and the dedication of our ELL teachers. One teacher summarizes her experience: *“Yes, I teach them English grammar and vocabulary, while the students make me a more compassionate, empathetic, and humble person.”*

As Valentine’s Day approaches, our hearts at *Caminando Juntos* expand with love and gratitude to you, our donors, supporters, partners, volunteers, and friends. I, April Ross, thank you for welcoming me as the Director and ELL Coordinator of this ministry. I hold dear the mission of *Caminando Juntos* as I humbly water the seeds planted by Sister Sheila Schnell and the Presentation Sisters. Please join me in “welcoming the stranger” with HEARTS WIDE-OPEN.

In God’s all-embracing heart,

April Ross, *Director & ELL Coordinator*  
Sister Janet Horstman, *Immigration Legal Services*  
Sister Pegge Boehm, *Support Services & Advocacy*  
Astrid Rosario, *Office & Resource Manager*



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**Your donation makes possible the following:** *note the underlined description on your check*

- \$100 – **Plane Ticket** (partial) for unaccompanied minors to Sioux Falls from an immigration shelter
- \$50 – **Transportation** to and from immigration court in Minneapolis (for asylum proceedings)
- \$25 – **Welcome Backpack** for newly-arrived children (school supplies and personal hygiene items)
- \$25 – **Welcome Basket** for newly-arrived families (with home necessities)
- \$20 – **Good Neighbor Fund** to help with emergency situations (housing, basic necessities)
- \$5 – **Stuffed animals** for the children that come to *Caminando Juntos*

A ministry of:

