



OCAN

Solidarity • Support • Advocacy

OREGON COMMUNITY ASYLUM NETWORK

Because No One Is Illegal

VOLUME 11, No.2

AUGUST 2026

OUR MISSION

To assist and advocate for people seeking safe haven in the United States through grassroots organizing, education, and sponsorship

OCAN Food Pantry

Ginger Gouveia

OCAN now has a food pantry specifically serving our families. Thanks to a \$5000 grant from Oregon Community Foundation, we developed a food pantry with culturally specific food items often not found in traditional food pantries.

Every two weeks, volunteers deliver a bag of food to OCAN community members with basic commodities like masa, dry beans, rice, eggs, chicken, tortillas, and other items. It doesn't matter if a family is employed or not. Food and housing prices have increased so much that this pantry helps offset some of the increased costs. We recognize that if a parent is unable to provide healthy food for their children, it can be very worrisome for them. These provisions help reduce that stress a little.

We have received positive, appreciative responses from the families served! At the same time, it also helps to relieve other food pantries that provide assistance to so many families struggling with food insecurity in Lane County.

Central Presbyterian Church in Eugene recently offered to collaborate with us! Their Social Justice committee purchases masa, beans, and rice in large quantities; repackages them in ziploc bags for each family; and delivers them to our distribution site. This generous offer greatly helps with finances and time repackaging.

We are hoping that OCAN supporters with large vegetable gardens will consider donating extra harvests to the pantry project. Tomatoes, beans, carrots, garlic, cucumbers, apples, pears—virtually any fruit—is welcomed! If you have items you would like to donate, please email Ginger at beachwalker85@pm.me to arrange a time to pick up the items.

Please copy and paste URLs referenced in this issue into your web browser.

In Loving Memory of Our Friend Ken Crouse

Ken Crouse was a longtime friend to OCAN and to many marginalized people in our community. He passed away suddenly last month while on vacation. OCAN had a gathering in his memory on June 30. These sentiments were shared at that time.

We are gathered here tonight in love and in sorrow to mourn the loss of our friend Ken Crouse. Ken was about living his faith. His life was so much louder than his words, yet when he spoke he did so with deep compassion and with a passion for justice. He walked with them and provided God's presence to each of them in whatever situation they were living. Ken also had a clever wit that could light up a room!

—Caroline Zaworski

Many of us connected with OCAN felt Ken's presence in our lives in different ways.

- He accompanied our neighbors to immigration court, to check-in appointments, and to attorney appointments, which included drives to Portland and many other places around the state.
- Ken was the expert many of us went to when we needed explanations about the confusing laws and changing tactics of ICE. Many of us benefited from his knowledge and clear, informed answers to questions on immigration law and other legal matters. He wrote articles for the OCAN newsletter that clearly explained complex immigration issues and legislation.
- Ken was a legal observer for the Civil Liberty Defense Center. He recently "graduated" from their class and was able to lead "Know Your Rights" workshops in Spanish for immigrants.
- Ken helped many people studying for the very challenging Spanish-language written driver's license test. He somehow figured out how to explain the exam in a manner that made sense and resulted in people passing this important test and getting a driver's license.
- Ken's presence was greatly appreciated at bi-weekly support group meetings as well as in meetings focusing on accompaniment, direct support, and legal support training.
- He painstakingly planted many trees on the acreage around his house, creating a wildlife habitat for many living creatures.



Many of us were helped by this soft-spoken man who did so much to help others. He will be missed. The best way to honor Ken's memory is to carry forward the work that he did without fanfare, so quietly and so well.

OCAN's Recent Retreat

Ed Black

For the past six and a half years, OCAN has provided various levels of financial aid and support services to people living in Lane County seeking safe haven in the United States. Recent actions by the federal government to racially profile, linguistically discriminate, and deport without due process hundreds of thousands of people residing in the U.S. while navigating the immigration system—as well as arresting those attempting to advocate for and protect them—have created tremendous stress and uncertainty within asylee, asylum seeker, and refugee communities. Concurrently, OCAN's capacity to assist our neighbors at the level needed has been challenged. Our fundraising and social service efforts increased significantly over the past 18 months.

Several members of OCAN's core membership met in early June to discuss the need for operational changes to our organization. We determined the need to identify (a) where we are as an organization, and (b) where we should focus our attention in the future in order to sustain needed services to our community of asylees and asylum seekers while sustaining our ability as volunteers to provide those services. We decided to hold a half-day retreat in mid-July to consider changes that would allow us to function more effectively within the current challenging political environment.

Over the past several years, OCAN has had a valuable working relationship with Pacific Refugee Support Group (PSRG) – a professionally staffed nonprofit with a mission similar to OCAN's. We asked PRSG to facilitate our workshop. Many thanks to Angela Swan and Peter Newbegin for co-facilitating a very productive workshop on July 21. We identified:

- Activities that OCAN does well (facilitating twice monthly support group meetings, fundraising)
- Areas of overlap with other organizations (e.g., transportation, food assistance)
- OCAN's unique qualities (e.g., no administrative costs, rapid response to needs)

We then identified two areas of potential improvement:

- Sharing knowledge: How to consolidate and best provide access to the information OCAN volunteers need to support community members
- Triaging requests for assistance: The need to develop and document procedures to help OCAN prioritize the use of limited resources and still allow for quick and decisive responses

These action items resulted in folks signing up to follow through or in finding a volunteer to spearhead them. We appreciate Angela's generosity in offering to facilitate future retreats for OCAN on a regular basis.

How You Can Help!

The community members we are helping continue to be scared that ICE will detain them or their family or friends. Some have lost a breadwinner through ICE. Some have lost a job or had their hours cut since Latino businesses are getting less business due to their customers being afraid to go out.

We need your help in the following ways:

- Accompany asylees to their scheduled ICE appointments in Eugene and in Portland. We also need volunteers to drive asylees to their appointments. We like to have volunteers attend a workshop on how to accompany asylees. If you are interested, please contact us and we can put you on a waiting list for the training.
- Help in picking up food boxes, groceries, and prescriptions, or help in transporting and accompanying people picking up these items.
- Help in transporting and supporting people going to medical appointments.
- Make part of the meal for a twice-monthly support group for asylees.
- Transport people to their jobs due to fear of being taken by ICE on their way to or from work.

We also need:

- Donations of household products (e.g., toilet paper, paper towels, toiletries, cleaning products)
- Affordable housing
- Donations for bus passes
- Bike locks and helmets
- Phones
- Volunteers who can speak Spanish (there are many tasks that can be done if you don't speak Spanish)
- Volunteers who can provide occasional care to child asylees (parents would be nearby)

Tell your friends and neighbors about OCAN! There are many ways to resist the current regime: Encourage them to subscribe to our newsletter, donate, sign up to volunteer, and support our fundraisers by going to: <https://grassrootsconnect.org/ocan>.

The Piñata Still Hung in the Yard

Florence S. Blas, OFS

A Franciscan reflection on human dignity and America's 250th birthday



As our nation celebrates 250 years of independence, we rightly give thanks for the ideals that have shaped the American story: liberty, justice, the rule of law, and the conviction that every person possesses inherent dignity. For me, this reflection is no longer theoretical. It has become deeply personal.

My tenants had just celebrated their infant daughter's first birthday. It was the Fourth of July. Three immigrant families with young children gathered for a simple celebration. There was homemade food, laughter, a colorful piñata, and the joy that surrounds a one-year-old child. After we shared a meal, I went home.

For the past two years I watched this family quietly build a life. They worked long hours, often taking overtime. Little by little they exchanged bicycles for dependable cars, faithfully paid their rent, cared lovingly for their children, and built a supportive community. They were doing what countless families have done throughout our nation's history—working hard, raising children, and hoping for a better future.

Early the next morning I received a text message. Around 11:00 the night before, ICE officers came to their house and attempted to take them into custody.

When I arrived at the property, I saw the remnants of lives interrupted. Baby belongings were still inside the home. The birthday piñata still hung where children had laughed only hours before. Their vehicle remained parked outside. They had fled so quickly that much of their life remained exactly where it had been the evening before. This was no longer an issue I read about in the newspaper. This was a nightmare up close and personal.

Immigration is never merely a political issue. It is about human lives and the sacred dignity of every person. The Church teaches that nations have the right and responsibility to enforce just laws, while insisting that every migrant is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves dignity, due process, compassion, and mercy.

Francis of Assisi teaches us to approach every person as a brother or sister. We are not a nation of vigilantes. We are a nation governed by the rule of law. Laws matter. Due process matters. Human dignity matters.

I recognize that people may hold different opinions about immigration policy. But there comes a point when silence is no longer an option. My son reminded me that I was placing myself at risk as "a small brown woman." His concern was real, but fear cannot become my guide.

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As a Franciscan, I cannot seek my own comfort while others live in hiding. This is not about politics. It is about the sacred dignity of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Because of what I witnessed, I cannot return to comfortable silence. I will continue to provide housing to immigrant families. I will continue to pray, and I will continue to participate in peaceful public witness and lawful civil action. I do so not because I am driven by politics, but because I am guided by the Gospel.

As secular Franciscans, our Rule calls us to go from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. On this 250th anniversary of our nation, may God grant us the courage to welcome the stranger, defend the dignity of every person, and become instruments of His peace.

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Ed. note: As of this writing, the family managed to escape and is safe. OCAN continues to help them.



JULY 1 2026 - AUGUST 31 2026

ESCUDO LATINO SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

• Backpack,	• Rulers,
• Pencils,	• Glue/GlueSticks,
• Color Pencils,	• Notebooks,
• Pens,	• Highlighters,
• Print Paper,	• Composition Notebook,
• Notebook Paper,	• Crayons & Markers,
• Folders,	• Erasers,
• Scissors.	

We will be collecting donations at various locations, stay updated with sites near you by following us on our Facebook page "ESCUDO LATINO".

We will be accepting cash and check donations. Please reach out to Escudo Latino via email at escudolatino2@gmail.com for more details.



SCAN ME



Amazon

Escudo Latino
541-321-8034
escudolatino2@gmail.com



OCAN Fundraisers Help Families in Need

A huge thank-you to the organizations who recently sponsored fundraisers that help us to continue to assist immigrant families in our community. So far this year OCAN has spent over \$40,000 helping our neighbors. Approximately 70 percent went for housing support. The remainder was used for utilities, legal expenses (including the new annual work authorization fee of a staggering \$102), help for families to return to their home countries (bus and plane tickets, etc), household goods, and other needed items.

- **3 Jars Collective** organized a dance party with **Penny Joy and friends** at the **Eugene Garden Club** to raise money for OCAN, Equity Corp of Oregon, and Catholic Community Services Refugee and Immigrant Services Program. More than \$5000 was donated to OCAN.
- OCAN hosted an event at **Oakshire Taphouse** and raised over \$1050. Oakshire Taphouse donated their space as well as \$1/pint sold. Many local businesses and individuals donated items or gift cards for our raffle basket, and **Cross Current** provided music entertainment.
- **Indivisible Eugene/Springfield** hosted the Solidarity Social at the **Hybrid Gallery**. Attendance was high and included musical and dance performances and a silent auction. Funds raised were donated to CCS's Refugee and Immigrant Support Program and OCAN. Each organization received more than \$4000.
- **100+ Women Who Care - Eugene/Springfield** gifted OCAN over \$11,300 after being nominated by an active member of both organizations.
- A group of artist friends including **Deborah Dailey, Rogene Manas, and Lynne Swift** organized a Pop-Up Art Sale at The Garden on Friendly. Many other local artists donated pieces and participated. Over \$10,00 was raised in just four hours!
- The **Sanctuary Committee of Temple Beth Israel** recently donated \$200 to OCAN.

Many thanks to all the businesses, groups, and participants in these events! This is a terrifying time for many families. Rent assistance is needed many times due to the breadwinner being kidnapped by ICE or to other family emergencies. Jobs are scarce for people who *can* work, and of course, everything is more expensive. The importance of this assistance cannot be overstated.

ACT NOW: Devastating farm worker legislation introduced by Republicans.

[E-mail your US Representative TODAY!](#)

Can you believe it?! **Four Democrats just joined Republican Representative GT Thompson (R-PA) and 45 other Republicans in co-sponsoring legislation to make Trump's farm worker wage cuts into federal law.** [We need to stop this.](#)

The Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act (SAWA) would **massively expand the exploitative H-2A guest worker program to year-round positions**, all while expanding the definition of agriculture to include non-agricultural employers and **slashing US farm workers' jobs and wages.**

This bill enables employers to bring in more guest workers whose legal status and permission to work in the US is at the whim of agricultural employers. **This means local worker jobs will be put at risk.** Between 2018 and 2023, the US Department of Labor conducted 2,857 investigations of employers that hired H-2A workers and found at least one violation in 84% of cases. **More than 40 percent of those violations involved wage-related issues, including worker underpayment and illegal payroll deductions.**

Why should we give agricultural employers even more unchecked power to hire workers who cannot change jobs, negotiate higher wages, or demand fairer working conditions without risking the loss or nonrenewal of their visas? Why would an agricultural employer ever hire local farm workers when Congress has made it easier and cheaper to exploit a more vulnerable workforce?

Some of the proposed changes in this bill would:

- Allow year-round industries to access the program by striking "seasonal" and defining "temporary" as up to 350 days.
- Make the Trump Administration's huge wage cuts for farm workers legally permanent.
- Allow ag employers to deduct housing costs from the already-lowered worker pay.
- Dramatically ease the requirements to recruit American farm workers first before recruiting out of country H-2A workers.

That any elected official – *especially a Democrat* – can back this is disturbing. [Send a message to your US Representative](#) telling them to do everything they can to block this vile legislation.

Act Now!

PS: Spread the word by sharing this campaign on:

[Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Bluesky](#), [Twitter](#) & [Threads](#)



Annual World Refugee Day Event on June 20

The World Refugee Day event held on June 20 addressed the needs of refugees in difficult circumstances around the world. The event, sponsored by Catholic Community Services' Refugee & Immigrant Services Program in coordination with the Refugee Resettlement Coalition, was held at First United Methodist Church in Eugene.

Loving Seeds Childcare, Tamana Celebrations, and Don Chava's Spoon were on site with displays, with Don Chava's Spoon providing key catering support for a free buffet, made possible by donations and the support of Lane County Government.

We were grateful for the support of OCAN in designing a Remembrance and Low Stimulation space to honor and grieve those impacted by detention, deportation, fear, and separation. The peaceful space incorporated flowers, a symbolic empty chair, and a resting area for those needing a break from the busyness of the celebration.

Interfaith Alliance with Migrants brought a new interactive, educational component to the day with a gratitude card-writing station. Over the course of the event, attendees wrote 50 cards, thanking groups and individuals who provided support for immigrant communities in many forms through advocacy, direct support, accompaniment, and more. The experience was designed to help guests learn about positive actions being taken on a local and statewide level while providing encouragement and thanks to those already engaged in the work.

This annual event was a tremendous success, and it simply would not have been possible without the support of so many volunteers. From early morning setup to the final moments of cleanup, the volunteer team showed up with energy, heart, and dedication that made the whole day shine.

Thanks for everyone's help with greeting guests, supporting our food and cooking team, facilitating activities, providing interpretation support, and much more. Together we created a welcoming and joyful experience for the refugee clients we serve and for our broader Eugene community.

For a \$20 donation, an attendee could fill a 5-gallon bucket with hygiene items for a family of four: towels, soap, combs, toothbrushes, and other supplies the RRC Kits Team provided. WRD guests assembled 72 kits throughout the evening.

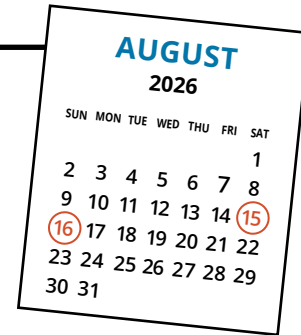
The Kits Team, in coordination with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), works with organizations in many countries to distribute relief kits to refugees. In 2025, MCC shipped 21,401 relief kits to Gaza, Ukraine, Cuba, Malawi, and Zambia—including 100 kits from Eugene.

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On August 15 and 16, the Kits Team will coordinate the assembling of 1,000 school kits for kids in displacement camps. The kits will be distributed by MCC in locations where they are needed most.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

You can help assemble these school kits on **Saturday, August 15 at 1:00** and on **Sunday, August 16 at 10:00** at the Eugene Mennonite Church/Wellsprings School, 3590 West 18th Avenue in Eugene.



FOOD DRIVE

August 3rd to 14th
Drop off at 576 Olive St.
Monday - Friday 12-4 PM

Many refugee and other displaced families in our community face food insecurity. Your food and essential item contributions help Pacific Refugee Support Group keep our in-office food pantry stocked with culturally appropriate food and household essentials, providing immediate assistance when it's needed most.

Contribution Guidelines:

- Unopened items
- Non-expired foods
- Shelf stable products
- Clean, undamaged packaging
- No homemade foods

Most Needed Items

Grains:

- Rice
- Pasta
- Couscous
- Flour



Breakfast & Snacks:

- Cereal
- Oatmeal
- Granola bars
- Dried fruit



Beans & Lentils:

- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Pinto beans



Canned Goods:

- Canned soups
- Tomato paste
- Canned beans



Proteins:

- Canned Tuna
- Peanut butter
- Canned chicken



Cooking Essentials:

- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Salt & pepper
- Spices



Hygiene Items:

- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Laundry detergent
- Toilet paper

Each contribution makes a big impact. Thank you!



Questions and coordination inquiries
email <prsg-cso@pnwrs.org>

OCCAN Depends on Financial Contributions to Help Asylees in Our Area!

Since OCCAN formed in the fall of 2018, we have helped more than 170 asylee adults and children and are now actively assisting about 50 adults and children. We recently had referrals from LCC, Bethel School District, and other community organizations. The need is great to help with rent, utilities, and bonds to get people out of detention centers.

Here is how your donation can help:

\$250 - Helps fund an immigration attorney consultation

\$100 - Helps with rent assistance for a week

\$50 - Helps with a monthly bus pass

\$35 - Helps pay for cell phone service for a month

Grassroots Connect serves as our nonprofit umbrella and fiscal sponsor. Your donation to OCCAN is now fully tax deductible. Grassroots Connect does not take any money for this service, so if you donate by check, 100% of your donation will go to help asylees. If you donate online, there is a 5% fee from Stripe.

To donate by check:

1. Write a check payable to OCCAN.
2. Indicate on the memo line if your donation is for a specific OCCAN project such as "monthly bus passes" or "help with legal fees."
3. Mail to OCCAN, P.O. Box 5961, Eugene, OR 97405.

To donate to OCCAN online:

1. Go to the OCCAN page on the Grassroots Connect website: **<https://grassrootsconnect.org/ocan>**
2. Scroll down and click on DONATE.
3. Your donation will go toward supporting our community members with rent assistance, help with legal fees, and other needs.