

GREETINGS TO ALL OUR DEAR FRIENDS OF
BAPTIST IMMIGRATION SERVICES NETWORK.

LET'S LOOK AT WHERE WE WERE JUST SIX MONTHS AGO.

An infant ministry was about to be born. Much preparation had been made to receive it, and now the long-awaited moment had come. A BABY BISON WAS BORN. No, really, it wasn't a buffalo calf; it was BISN, Baptist Immigration Services Network. For those who had been so involved in convincing people that this ministry was needed, it was a moment for rejoicing. BISN would grow rapidly (as all babies do) and serve people from all over the world that envisioned the United States as the land of milk and honey and desired nothing more than to have the opportunity to live here in peace. Because many of you have wanted to make that dream come true, we can now look forward to receiving BISN centers throughout Texas. You have been gathering your paperwork to send to BIA and after you have sent it, you know it will be only a matter of time before you are recognized and involved in ministry to immigrants. Praise God for opportunities to express our love for Him, the Holy One who loved us and sent His Son!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Krista and I saw many of you at the Baptist General Convention of Texas convention in November, and we want to thank the following for helping us at our display table in the Exhibition Hall. They either manned the table or made themselves available to visitors to talk about their ministry in the community.

- Wole Ajala from Region 7
- Tihara Vargas from Region 6
- Randal Babin from Region 7
- Xergio Chacin from Region 9
- Jesus Romero from Region 6
- The individual (who shall remain nameless) who took some of our business cards (unknown to us) and went about the Hall asking people if they knew about this new ministry and telling them that they should go and talk to us.
- Christian Life Commission members who filled in for us Monday and Tuesday mornings while we did our presentations.

Perhaps this year some of you -- who will have experienced this ministry first-hand -- will want to participate in this manner.

Promised I'd introduce the third member of our triad

Unfortunately, he will no longer be with us as he graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in December and has been accepted by the Peace Corps.

Samuel Gunter was with the Christian Life Commission as an intern for more than a year. When Baptist Immigration Services Network became an entity of its own, Samuel was the man who had created, composed, researched and spent sleepless nights thinking of how he could get this program on the road to service for Christ by July. He is a multi-talented young man (you should hear him sing the French National Anthem), and he spent his formative years on the mission field with his missionary parents. He is multi-lingual, and this will help him to easily pick up any language spoken in whatever country he is assigned to live and serve.

Samuel, thank you for the strong base you laid for BISN,

- For your dexterity with the Internet where you always managed to find just the right information needed regarding precedents, logos, software, contacts, the list goes on and on;
- For always being good-natured even after having to work with us two *wimmin*, Krista and me;
- And last but not least, for doing all this while you were assigned exclusively to CLC.

We love you and will miss you. May God add to the roadmap to where He wants you to serve Him ultimately, through this new venture.

Pray with us that we can find a new intern to be strictly BISN support.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Krista and I have an office! Yep, we now have a place we can call our own. Where were we before this? We had two tables in the CLC reception office; one file drawer supplemented by Krista's plastic crate, one computer and one phone between us; oh, we were pathetic. Thanks to Suzii Paynter, she moved CLC to new quarters that include space dedicated to BISN and our almost-here Intern. We're now in **Suite 410**. So, **Ya'll come see us!**

Carmelita's New e-mail, phone number: Carmelita.Hernandez@bgct.org

Please don't use my Earthlink e-mail or my cell telephone number anymore. Use the office number on my business card, which is **512-473-2288**. Don't use bisn@bgct.org; it didn't work after all.

Upcoming Trainings:

Immigration Law Institute: Live, Feb 22, 23, 2007, Houston

Video, April 12-13, 2007, Dallas; registration # 800/204-2222 ext.1574; see

brochure: Texas Bar Immigration law institute.pdf

Dr. Alex Camacho Training: Family Based Petitions, Feb. 5, 6, 2007, Plano; contact # (972) 562-4561 or camacho@ticnet.co

CLINIC: Survey of Immigration Laws, Feb. 15, 16, 2007, Dallas; Violence Against Women Act, March 22, 23, 2007, Dallas; Bars & Waivers, March 26, 27, 2007, El Paso; contact Paola Garces, (214) 634-7182 ext. 223

Stay with me! Here is something that might interest you.

Krista received a call one day from a young man who said he was a Case Manager at an Immigration Customs & Enforcement (ICE) Family Detention Center (FDC) located in Taylor, just outside Austin. Jessamyn Murphy was looking for help to provide certain things for the children living with their parents in the FDC, and he had found BISON's name while doing a search on the Internet. He and Lynne Albright, Unit Manager, asked that we come to Taylor so that we could get acquainted and receive specific information on why they needed outside help.

They met us in the parking lot and took us to a local café where we had lunch and talked a lot of the conditions within the Center. We could not go into the Center until we were run through a federal check since this is a federal institution. They specifically hoped we could help them get kitchenettes for each of the "pods" (family living areas). In accordance with the Warden's orders, everything brought in to give to the children must be exactly alike. In this case they needed eleven (11) kitchenettes (since there are 11 "pods") and they must all be alike and the same color. The children would then have something to occupy their time. All detainees from age 3 through adults get one hour for schooling and one hour for recreation each day, so they are left with 22 hours to occupy themselves.

The contractor that runs the Center, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) provides "uniforms" for the detainees. Children's clothing is the same as that worn by adults. There are about 200 children at this center. Some of the children are citizens but because their mothers and/or fathers are here without inspection, the whole family has been picked up, been determined undocumented and incarcerated until they can be sent back to their countries.

There are no Mexicans since they are easily transported to and sent across the border. Not so the Central and South Americans, islanders, and a wide spectrum of other nationalities from all over the world. They will stay until they can be either bused or flown back to their countries of origin.

We have made contacts with the Methodist and Baptist ladies who have expressed an interest in helping out with school supplies, games, etc. The Austin Baptist Women's Missionary Union has desired to help by paying for the 11 kitchenettes.

We did get into the building on our second visit and even went a bit farther into the Center to the point of hearing a prison door clang shut behind us. Since I had never visited a prison it was a very frightening experience that chilled the back of my neck. I had nothing to fear, but place you in the place of people who don't know what's going to happen to them and their children once that door shuts behind them!

You might have seen something about this particular center on television or read about it in the newspaper. There have been demonstrations, marches and there will

probably be some legal proceeding filed by ACLU or another watchdog nonprofit to close it down. An account of all this has even made it to BBC (BBCmundo.com), an international news agency.

I wanted to share this with you because our Centers are going to be safe havens where people can come for help and can trust us to have their best interests at heart. We want them to know that we will do everything we can legally do to help them adjust their status, if at all possible, so they will not end up in such centers.

This is neither Krista's nor my job, but the Lord placed it in our hands to do, so we will see it through until we hand it over to local groups willing to help Lynne and Jessamyn. Please pray for these two people who are inside and are trying to make a difference in the lives of these prisoners.

No one knows what this new year will bring, so we can only pray and do what we feel led to do. Your BISN servants plan to do a bit of traveling in order to meet, encourage, help, convince or entreat for the cause of the stranger in our land. The Texas State Legislature is in session, and we expect that immigration will be a topic that will be soundly discussed. Governor Rick Perry seems to be trying to get ahead of the game by proposing a guest worker program for Texas. We must try to be ready to serve as soon as possible so that we can fill a need that will surely be there when decisions are made on how to act and what to do for immigrants.

One way that you can help is to get acquainted with people in your Region who are desirous of participating in this ministry or who are also preparing to minister. Call each other, encourage each other, help each other with answers to questions or by sharing what you have experienced as you've gathered your documentation, calculated what the area will bear in determining fees, discovered sources of funding, etc. If you need names, phone numbers or e-mail addresses, let us know and we will furnish this information.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We hope you have enjoyed Newsletter No. 2.1. Look for a better, colorful and definitely more professional edition in the future.

BENDICION/BLESSINGS

Carmelita M. Hernandez

Krista Gregory