

Collaboration & Community Stakeholder Visit

This month, 10 individuals from three different collaborative groups in the Indianapolis area – Indiana AID, Indianapolis Liberation Center, and Live Free Indiana – had the opportunity to visit the Marion County jail for a community stakeholder visit. This visit was multiple months in the making, putting the request forward through various channels and levels within ICE and with jail leadership.

On October 17th, the group entered the premises to first meet with the colonel, the jail commander and a major within the jail complex and then afterward to take a tour of the facility and to speak with the ICE detainees currently being held there. The colonel and jail commander provided an overview of the jail as a whole and answered many questions from the group related to the ICE detention contract that Marion County jail holds. In total, there are two cell blocks, which they refer to as “housing units,” within the jail set aside for ICE detainees. The units hold a maximum of 64 beds so max capacity would be 128; the contract with ICE is for 100 beds. On the day that we visited, there were 81 individuals in ICE detention across the two units.

The colonel and commander provided the group with a tour of the jail, giving an overview of the kitchen, medical facilities, and programming that is available to the general population. The group sought clarification about whether that programming is available to those in ICE detention, but in practice it does not appear to be. In light of this, we asked them to consider allowing Indiana AID to provide support and care to the individuals, ideally through in-person programming along with virtual visits. Those discussions are ongoing at this time.

At the end of the tour, the group was brought to the two cell blocks of ICE detainees. They were allowed to enter and speak with the people detained there. The men were grateful for visitors as they shared the difficulties they’ve had in getting information about their situation, updates on their cases, or connecting with resources. The stories shared were heartbreaking. Many in detention had no criminal case, some had work authorizations or even green cards, and yet they’d still been detained. The visitors took notes and shared words of care and support with those around them before they had to leave.

An important step occurred through this community stakeholder visit. We are still in the initial steps of hopefully building a presence of support for those detained in Marion County jail similar to what we have in Clay County, but we’re grateful for the access received during the in-person visit.

A Message to the Outside World

[The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of Indiana AID]

Hello to the outside world. I say it this way because we have not seen the light of the sun and every day that passes is a constant fight accompanied by tears as we remember our families. I remember my granddaughter running, my grandson saying, "I love you, Lito." I know that I committed an error and that there are those who see me as a monster, but before the eyes of God I am someone special. We are the light of the world and He is the voice of those without a voice.

I only want this to end. Many of us are exhausted in every way. My only wish is to return to regain the freedom that they took from us and to return back to be with those who love us.

How long?

This injustice - I can only ask for mercy. To think that I am nothing - but in Him we are everything - I continue forward.

-Eduardo Castillo

Creativity by Necessity



This Rosary was made by a Bolivian man in ICE custody, created with nothing more than a disposable black trash bag. He let his pinky fingernail grow in an exaggerated way and shaped it to use it as a cutting device. He would meticulously cut long strips from a new trash bag, about 2 inches wide. He would then tie a water bottle to one end of the plastic strips and stretch and twist them until they formed strings. These he would stretch again until they become strong pieces of thin plastic string. With great skill, the gentleman began to weave them together to form very durable necklaces, bracelets, and crucifixes. Working in intervals of 10 to 15 minutes at a time so it wouldn't gain too much attention, it would take him about a week to make one of these items.



A Prayer Vigil & Other Public Events

The Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg and the Sisters of Providence at St. Mary of the Woods have had a relationship with persons detained at Clay County Jail for some time. One sister from each group has been visiting the detained immigrants once a week to sing, pray, and read Scripture. They also offer communion to those among the detained immigrants who are Roman Catholic and request it. When Indiana AID volunteers started visiting Clay County Jail in November of 2023, we heard from the immigrants detained in the jail about a nun who would visit them weekly, always on a Tuesday, and how grateful they were for that consistent care and support.

On Wednesday, October 22nd, the two groups of Sisters organized a prayer vigil in front of the Clay County Courthouse, just a short block from the jail. Fifty-five people gathered for the vigil and protest. Two individuals participated who also volunteer with Indiana AID and they shared their experience.

“We held signs with messages like “Jesus Migrante” (Migrant Jesus), “Stand with the most vulnerable,” and “Love your neighbor.” Since we were right on National Ave, which is five lanes wide, and it was rush hour, there was a lot of traffic going by. Some drivers honked and waved to show support. One person pulled over to voice his disagreement, saying that people should use legal channels. A participant of the vigil responded that we were showing the love of Christ. He rolled up his window and drove away.

“There were prayers , a few short speeches, and a litany. We processed around the courthouse while praying the rosary. One person read stories of the suffering of Jesus and parallel stories of immigrants who had suffered. The organizer offered water and snacks. A reporter from Terre Haute interviewed several participants. We left encouraged and strengthened for the journey ahead.”

Indiana AID has also had the opportunity to be present at more public-facing events, sharing about our group and our focus in supporting individuals in ICE detention. Over the past few months, Indiana AID has tabled or shared flyers at multiple neighborhood block parties, provided presentations for a variety of faith groups, and had the opportunity to raise our community’s awareness of what is currently happening in ICE detention across our state and our country and how people can get involved. We are grateful for every opportunity we’ve had, every conversation we’ve held, and we look forward to continuing to aim light on this important topic.

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1

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virtual visitation
partners

2

Virtual visitation
partners in other
various languages

3

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coordination
experience

4

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& fundraising
experience

5

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data input



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