



# NEW LIFE New Beginnings

*“For I know the plans I have for you, to prosper, not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future.”* (Jeremiah 29:11)

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 provide hope and a new beginning for newly-

arrived immigrants. As we move through the Lenten season and draw nearer to spring, we are reminded of the wonderful gift of new life and new beginnings made possible by our Savior. This letter captures a few of the ways we have inspired hope in our Latino brothers and sisters this year, and how they in turn, have inspired hope in us. •

## A NEW BEGINNING FOR OUR IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM →

Caminando Juntos has been blessed by the addition of a new immigration legal specialist, Christy Nicolaisen, who works alongside Sister Janet in our immigration program. Christy joined the CJ team in June of 2021, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the areas of immigration and non-profit management. She learned Spanish while studying abroad in Mexico and now uses the language to meet with our clients on a variety of immigration-related needs. Prior to joining our ministry, Christy served as the Executive Director of the Multi-Cultural Center of Sioux Falls for over 10 years and as a Board of Immigration Appeals representative for 14 years. She recently completed the process to renew her accreditation with the Department of Justice, after only a few short months in our ministry. In addition to her many years of experience working with the immigrant and refugee populations, Christy has also taught ESL, GED, and Citizenship courses and has won several awards for her work in the community. We are excited to see where this new beginning will take her and our ministry.



We are blessed by the new life our Social Work intern, Dalia, brings to our ministry.

## WHAT DOES YOUR DONATION MAKE POSSIBLE?

### \$50

» **Immigration Legal Services** for low-income individuals who cannot afford the hefty increases in application fees

» **Textbooks** for five English language learners

### \$25

» **Food cards** to local grocers for food necessities, diapers, and formula

» **Good Neighbor Fund** to help with emergency situations (housing, weatherization, other basic necessities)

## REALIZING THE AMERICAN DREAM

With tears of joy, great anticipation, and grinning from ear to ear, one of our immigration clients realized her dream of becoming a U.S. citizen. After traveling a road with many twists and turns, Griselda will soon receive her U.S. passport, giving her the right to vote and hold other privileges shared by citizens of our country.

Griselda came to the U.S. with her parents when she was just two years old. It wasn't until high school that she discovered she was brought here without documentation. Doors began to open for her with the

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program in 2012, but her journey was still arduous. Even though she married a U.S. citizen, she still had to apply for and receive a waiver of inadmissibility for having entered unlawfully: no small hurdle to clear. Griselda then returned to her home country for a visa interview, knowing that if her visa was not approved, she would have no way to return to the U.S. Thankfully, Griselda's visa was approved, and to her great joy, she is now a U.S. citizen!



## CELEBRATING IN COMMUNITY RENEWS LIFE

This year, our ministry's annual fundraiser and cultural celebration will take on new life as we return to gathering in-person on **May 7** after a two-year pause. With an average of 8,000 – 10,000 visitors in attendance, the *Cinco de Mayo* festival creates a sense of community by bringing people from the region together to celebrate Latino culture, music, food, and traditions. Highlights this

year include the *Esencia Latina* salsa band, a Chihuahua Fashion Show, a Guatemalan kite-flying contest, and many new Latino-owned businesses and food vendors. Seeing this colorful celebration come to life fills our hearts with joy and energizes us for the work we do all year long.



## NEW SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS NEW BEGINNINGS

Through the gracious contribution of one of our ministry's long-time teachers and volunteers, Don Loomis, Caminando Juntos is blessed to be able to offer a private scholarship fund to young Latino students and professionals who seek to advance their education and future career plans. Funds can be used towards post-secondary education,

professional licensing or certification, or job-specific training. Pictured here, is Elizabeth Hurtado, a second-generation Latino student who is pursuing her Master's in Education at the University of Sioux Falls. Elizabeth was one of the first scholarship applicants and plans to use the funds to help her pursue her dreams of becoming a teacher.

As spring approaches, we at Caminando Juntos want to thank our donors, supporters, partners, and friends for the new beginnings you have made possible for countless immigrants in our community. Thank you for holding dear the mission of Caminando Juntos and for helping to grow the seeds planted by God and the Presentation Sisters.

In God's all-embracing heart,

**Christy Nicolaisen**, *Immigration Legal Services Coordinator*

**Kathy Donis**, *Office & Resource Manager*

**Sr. Janet Horstman**, *Immigration Legal Services*

**April Ross**, *Director & Educational Coordinator*

**Angelica Narez**, *Support Services*

(Staff members from left to right)

