



## Assumption Mission Associates Friends of AMA Newsletter

Dear AMAs, Sisters, and AMA Families and Friends,  
Happy Advent!

St. Marie Eugénie was determined to work for the coming of Christ into people's lives and for the transformation of society. She was a firm believer in each one working for the good in the 'little sphere' in which they are situated. She believed in each person having a mission here on earth, a particular way in which they are called to contribute to the building of Christ's kingdom. You, our friends and donors, share in the Assumption mission, and we are so grateful for your continued support of our AMA program. By your generosity our AMAs continue to carry out the work of St. Marie Eugénie transforming the lives of the people they minister to!

While the news we read and hear today gets more and more discouraging and the peace and justice we long for do not seem to come at the societal level, I find inspiration in the words of St. Marie Eugénie from 136 years ago. St. Marie Eugénie penned the reflection below for the Sisters during the Advent season of 1882 when the Assumption was under great threat from the anti-Catholic government in France.

It is fitting then, that the faithful beg God to establish His Kingdom in this world even though it does not seem to want Him. It is fitting to pray with ardent desire and to say to the Lord: Come with your gentleness which converts, with your power which subdues. Come with the charm of your Wisdom and your Beauty. Come with the [splendor] of your doctrine and your Truth. Come, enlighten the world, come and save us. \*

I am happy to bring you the good news of the beneficial work that our present AMA Myra Villas, and AMA alum Maria Palacios are doing in their "little sphere" which you, our donors, are an important part of supporting!

In closing, I want to wish you and yours all the joy of family, the happiness of friends, and the wonder of the Christmas season! Come Lord Jesus!

Peace, Sandy

\*read entire text at <http://www.assumptionsisters.org/advent-and-kingdom>



16 Vineyard St.

Worcester, MA 01603

[directorassumption@gmail.com](mailto:directorassumption@gmail.com)

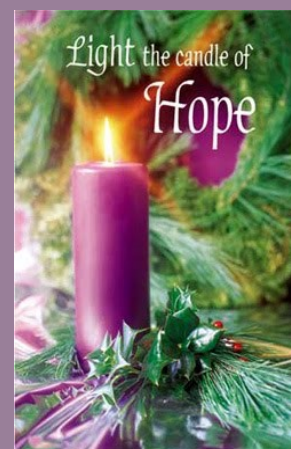
[assumptionvolunteers.org](http://assumptionvolunteers.org)

### Inside this issue:

Letter from the Director	1
Myra Villas—Newcastle	2
Maria Palacios—Border Reflection	3
News	4

Christmas is built  
upon a beautiful and  
intentional paradox;  
that the birth of the  
homeless should be  
celebrated in every  
home.

~G.K. Chesterton



*A Heartfelt  
"Thank You" to all our  
Donors!*

*Your support enables the  
work of AMA to continue!*

Abramoff, Kimiko  
Anastacio, Leaia Castaneda  
Anderson, Mary Lou  
Assumption College Mass Appeal  
Assumption Sisters, Lansdale  
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Castaldi, Peter & Cora  
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Collins, Matt and Beth  
Cosgrove, James  
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Kelly, Raymond & Kathleen  
Laprade, Richard & Susan  
Lee, Janet & William  
Martin, Scott & Xuan Trang  
Nguyen  
Maskarinec, Deacon Greg &  
Maureen

## Myra Villas— Kids Kabin, Newcastle upon Tyne, England

These past three months have been packed with a lot of fun, challenges, and personal growth. All the things I was nervous about – new roommates, working with kids every day, living in a new country, have become blessings to me.

The first big adjustment was establishing a community within our volunteer house. Rugile, Joseph, and I have dinners and prayer together every week. It's a comfort knowing we are in the same boat together as we try to do our best at Kids Kabin, while also making the most out of living in the UK.

Being at Kids Kabin has already been an unforgettable experience. From the start, we jumped right into sessions and I felt very invested in the community right away. I love being able to express myself creatively while learning practical skills – just like the kids who come to participate. In the beginning, I used to be wary about leading sessions in the woodwork or pottery rooms or helping out bike repairs. Now, I am happy to lead the way in any type of session.

Working with the kids has come easier than expected. I love guiding them along a project then seeing their personalities shine through their artwork. There hasn't been a child I've met who I didn't enjoy getting to know. Not to say they are always easy to manage, because there are difficult days when I feel like I handled everything wrong and should have reacted differently. But when situations get tough, they've been great learning experiences for me. I've been confident about working through problems because I know that I can discuss them openly with the other volunteers and staff. The support and encouragement from everyone at Kids Kabin positively shape my experience every day.

Before arriving, one of my goals was to be present and take everything day by day. When I'm working at Kids Kabin, I don't find myself waiting for the day to be over. I feel excited to see what new story or experience the day will hold. I'm glad that I've been following this goal because it has kept me open-minded and allowed me to push myself out of my comfort zone.

Outside of volunteering, I've been enjoying exploring Newcastle and traveling to surrounding areas. I try to get out on my bike as often as I can. I love cycling along the Tyne River and stopping in town to enjoy a coffee and the view of the Quayside. My favorite trip so far was a day spent in Glasgow, Scotland with my housemates Rugile and Joseph. It has also been nice knowing we have friendly and caring faces next door with the Sisters. I see them regularly at Friday morning prayer and also at celebrations like birthdays or our American Thanksgiving party. Sister Sylvia's pavlova cake is now my favorite dessert that I never knew I needed in my life.

I can't believe it's nearly the end of 2018. Going into the new year, I hope to keep building on the excitement and energy that I arrived with. I am hoping to continue seeing more of the UK, start more ambitious projects at Kids Kabin, and volunteer at other local charities.



Myra pictured here with housemates Rugile and Joseph in the woodworking shop at Kids Kabin.

*"Before arriving, one of my  
goals was to be present and  
take everything day by day."*



Myra, Joseph and Assumption Sisters!



## Maria Palacios—AMA Alum Chaparral 2015-16

### Reflection from the Border - Catholic Charities Respite Center in McAllen, Texas

As the crisis of family separation at the Border worsened every day, I felt helpless as I watched the news and read articles of the horrible conditions the families were going through. I could not believe that this was happening in this country and in this time. Never would I have imagined that I would witness firsthand the pain, the sadness, but above all, the faith of these families seeking refuge.

My journey began when Sister Norma Pimentel from Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley put out a call requesting deployed Catholic Charities professionals to provide support to her team at the Border. As the government scrambled to meet the Family Reunification deadline at the end of July, the Catholic Charities Respite Center in McAllen, Texas saw itself overflowing with families that had just been reunited and needed immediate assistance. And so when my supervisor at Catholic Charities of Fairfield County asked if I wanted to join Sister Norma's mission at the Border, without hesitation I answered

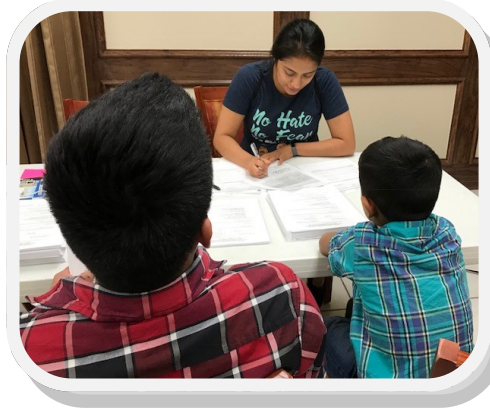
*"Most of the families were escaping obscene gang violence."*

because I speak fluent Spanish, I have experience in immigration legal work and most of all, because of my Border experience as an AMA in Chaparral, NM.

To say that my nine day journey was overwhelming is an understatement. From my arrival on July 24<sup>th</sup> to my departure on August 1<sup>st</sup>, the work never stopped. Each day we assisted over 200 different families that had just been released from ICE custody. The days were very fast moving from assisting clients with organizing their ICE documents for their upcoming court dates, making travel arrangements to get to their families in other parts of the country, to giving them a clean set of clothes, food and most important, a listening ear. As one of the only fluent Spanish speaker volunteers, I found there was always a line of people waiting to ask me questions. Though this was overwhelming at times, it gave me the opportunity to connect with the families. It showed that they felt comfortable enough to approach me and ask me questions and wanted to tell me their story. Most of the families were from Central America and embarked on the long journey from their home country to McAllen TX escaping the obscene gang violence in their countries, never expecting the harsh conditions that would welcome them in the "Land of the Free."

Most parents had spent between two to four months separated from their children. Parents were placed in one detention center near the Border, while their children were dispersed throughout the nation. With tears in her eyes, one mother from Honduras described to me how Border Patrol officers ripped her daughter away from her arms. She was able to describe to me that day in such detail since she had relived that exact moment in her head every day until she was reunited with her daughter. She didn't want to stay in this country anymore; she just wanted her daughter back.

As I worked with the parents in filing change of venue and address forms for their court date, their children waited anxiously next to them. Though the lines were long, the children held their parent's hands and stood



Maria processing a refugee family.

"yes." I was not thinking of the danger or the obvious trauma that I would endure, but rather my desire to contribute some assistance to the families. I was selected from my agency



Spreading some joy with the children!

McCarthy, Patrick & Ann  
McGuire, Frank & Diane  
Meunier, Hubert & Ronelle  
Molyneux, Greta  
Nguyen, Khanh Trang  
Noska, Amanda  
O'Connell, Christian  
O'Connor, John & Julie  
Owens, Joanne  
Pacek, Leonard & Carolyn  
Pantos, Barbara  
Patrick, Nicole  
Pax, Ann  
Penkala, Jeanne & Jan  
Pomfret, Peggy  
Putnam, Elizabeth  
Ramsey, Rachel  
Roxas, Candi  
Samelak, Diane & Tim  
Schmidt, Vida & Joe  
Sevilla, Enid  
Sheerin, Michael & Erin  
Sherman, Michelle  
Szelest, David & Margo  
Tan, Janet  
Thistle, Dawn  
Tran, Thuvan & Son  
Valdes, Marie A.S.  
Wood Brooks, Catherine and  
Brooks, Mark  
Yu, Gwendolyn  
Zaehring-Haskins, Maddie  
Ziegler, Josephine  
In memory of Gema Danahar  
Shumway, Aldona  
In memory of Waldo Brooks  
Brooks, Alice  
In memory of Sr. Mary Joan  
Rice, RA  
Corcoran, Janice  
In honor of Sr. Mary Ann's  
Jubilee  
Cesareo, Francesco & Filomena  
Hariss, Nubia  
Wolff, David & Monica  
Yu, Margie Chua



**Maria reading to the children (in her Assumption t-shirt!)**

in line with them for hours. They did not want to leave their sight. As they waited in line, some children would recite the Pledge of Allegiance while others would point at different items and say the color in English.

It has been just about four months since my experience at the Respite Center in McAllen Texas and reflecting back on it today is a little bittersweet. I miss reading with the children and playing soccer in the 103 degree weather, and to those that know about my experience in Chaparral, the heat was the only thing I didn't enjoy (besides toritos.) I tried to bring some joy to the children at the Center because I could only imagine the trauma they encountered at the detention centers when a simple peanut butter cracker would trigger them to retreat. During my year in Chaparral, I missed my mom tremendously but spoke to her over the phone almost every day, which made missing her more bearable. If I in my mid-20s missed my mom so much, knowing I would see her again and could talk to her on the phone, my heart breaks to think that these children went to bed every night not knowing if they would ever see their moms and dads again. I spent my mom's birthday in McAllen and even though I was sad I couldn't be there with her to celebrate, I could not think of a better way to honor my mother than to be helping these families.

The families were all extremely grateful for the work we were doing; never in my life have I been blessed so many times by so many people! I don't remember most of their names, but if I close my eyes, I can picture all their faces. My work there not only helped me grow professionally but I think it showed me that when you let God guide your work, even if your body and mind are tired, God will keep you going. I am so happy that I was able to be part of such a beautiful mission to provide some positivity to all the refugee families that I encountered during my time there but also saddened that this chaos has not ended. My hope is restored by the commitment of so many to lend a hand in this time of need, especially by the Sisters in Chaparral; as well as by all the Catholic Charities volunteers, by the thousands of donations received from every corner of the country and by the community of McAllen that didn't let hate separate them from strangers. We welcome the stranger because at some point we have all been strangers.

During my time in McAllen, I tried to keep a journal for the Catholic Charities website. If you would like to read some of those entries please visit, <https://www.ccfairfield.org/journal-entry-maria-palacios/>.



*Congratulations and many blessings to our Assumption Sisters who celebrated Jubilees this year! Sr. Michelle will celebrate her 50th Jubilee on December 8th!*



**Sr. Nuala with Provincial Sr. Mary Ann**



**Sr. Therese and friends!**



**Sr. Evelyn**



**Sr. Chabela, with friends!**