

# Help for refugees, immigrants bolstered

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Catholic Charities expects to resettle 450

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Despite uncertainty and concerns about policies of the incoming Trump administration, programs and agencies helping immigrants and refugees in Greater Cincinnati anticipate more growth in 2017.

The Refugee Resettlement Program of Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, which helped bring in 330 refugees in 2016, will help 450 this year, said Alisa Berry, the agency's chief operating officer who oversees the program. It resettled 260 refugees in 2015.

"The federal government keeps asking us to help more people," Berry said. "Demand for services increases every year."

She was one of five panelists to participate Thursday in an interfaith immigration insights event at Hebrew Union College. About 150 people attended to listen to updates on programs and perspective on a contentious national issue.

The opposition to legal immigration and assistance for undocumented immigrants and refugees helped Donald Trump defeat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential race.

The Thursday event was part of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Migration Week and in conjunction with Pope Francis' World Migrant and Refugee Day, which will be Tuesday.

The United States will accept 110,000 refugees in 2017, a number established by President Barack Obama. Trump has the authority to change the number for 2018.

Refugees arriving in Greater Cincinnati through Catholic Charities are coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Bhutan, Syria, Iraq and Myanmar.

Since the start of 2014, Catholic

## Immigrants

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Charities Southwestern Ohio has accepted and placed 460 unaccompanied minor children who crossed the U.S. southern border from Mexico and Central American nations. That number is the most of any Ohio county.

In January 2015, immigration attorney Allison Herre started as the local Catholic Charities' agency director of Legal Immigration Services.

Herre said in the past year that her agency has provided legal services to 180 individual clients and filed 200 applications for service. Most of the agency's legal clients are undocumented children for whom Herre's two-person team is seeking legal status as special immigrant juveniles. They also are helping people seeking asylum.

Other panelists were the Rev. Lisa Bernheisel, a Lutheran church pastor involved with immigrant communities; Jose Carbrera, an immigration organizer with the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center; and Tresor Kalala, a refugee from the Congo who escaped to a camp in South Africa before being resettled here by Catholic Charities.

The event also provided an update on the MARCC ID card, issued by the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati

and manufactured and distributed by Catholic Charities. It is recognized as legal identification by all city departments, including the police.

Peg Fox, MARCC executive director, said Thursday that more than 1,000 of the ID cards have been distributed since its first event in September. Demand is high for the card, and the next distribution will be Feb. 18 at Woodward High School in Bond Hill.

Doors will open at 9 a.m., but applicants are asked to arrive as early as 7 a.m. to get a processing number. Applicants need to bring a photo ID, normally one from their homeland; proof of address, such as a utility bill that is no more than 90 days old; and \$15 cash to process the card.

Card supporters say the card will improve public safety by providing people who otherwise do not have an ID card - people returning from prison, the homeless, immigrants, especially those living here without legal documentation.

Herre said her agency continues to advise clients to apply for the MARCC card and file for extensions of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Known as DACA, it was created by an Obama executive order in 2012 to provide status to children brought illegally into the country and who have grown up in the United States. It allows them to apply for driver's licenses and work permits.

Trump has sent mixed messages about DACA, saying he would undo it, but then offering to do "something" to help these young immigrants.