

*For I was hungry and
you gave me food, I was
thirsty and you gave me
drink, a stranger and
you welcomed me.*

- Matt. 25:35

Spring 2010



New Beginnings

Nearing the End of a Long Journey

When his father was killed, Abdull Omar Hussien knew it was time to leave.

As members of a minority group in Somalia, Abdull's family had experienced violence before. But when his father was shot in February of last year, Abdull's nine-year-old sister was sitting on his lap. She was killed, too. The double tragedy forced the family to sell their home and make their way to a refugee camp in Kenya. Abdull

continued on his own to Nairobi, where he was able to get a flight to Dubai. Then, it was on to Moscow, Cuba, Belize, Guatemala, Mexico. "I traveled by air, by bus, by foot ... almost every kind of way," Abdull explained. He entered the United States in May 2009 and was detained by Border Patrol.

Abdull, now 27, spent two months in detention. "I was so worried," he said. "I never thought I'd be in jail. When I set out to go to the United States, I never thought they would arrest me!" At his first court hearing, the judge referred Abdull to ProBAR, which offers free legal services for refugees and asylum applicants. His ProBAR attorney got Abdull to La Posada Providencia. Now, with the help of ProBAR and La Posada, Abdull has won asylum and is free to make a new life for himself in the United States.

"(The staff at La Posada) have been very, very, very, very helpful," Abdull said. "They are like my family. They take care of me. They provide so many

things." Among the help Abdull received are English lessons (he knew virtually no English when he arrived here), transportation to court and lawyer appointments, assistance with immigration and legal paperwork, and, of course, food and safe shelter.

Abdull will set out on the next leg of his long journey within the next few weeks. He will move to New England, where he has friends. He plans to work as a mechanic – a trade he learned working alongside his father. His family – his wife, mother and two brothers – remain in Somalia. His mother is too sick to travel, but he hopes to bring his wife to join him. "Then I will start my life."



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Why They Come – and Why We Need to Help

By Sister Zita Telkamp, Program Director

Said is from Somalia—a country of ongoing political upheaval, where just being on the street is dangerous. In 2004, Said's two brothers, 30 and 35, were driving when someone fired a rifle at them. The bullet passed through the jaws of the brother sitting in the passenger seat and then struck both hands of the brother who was driving. When the two injured brothers arrived at their parents' home covered in blood, their father suffered a stroke. The long-term results of this pointless violence: Said's father was paralyzed on his left side, one brother's jaws are now locked and he survives on liquids through a straw; the other brother's middle and index fingers on both hands are paralyzed—he cannot even button his shirt, let alone work.

It doesn't end there. In Somalia, it never ends that easily. In December 2008, Said's father was killed when Ethiopian soldiers attacked their neighborhood.

Said's mother supports her family by selling milk in the city. Very early every day she takes a bus – transferring twice – to get to the country where she buys milk, then returns to the city again by bus. The cost of the fares and the milk leaves only a small profit to support her family after a long day's work. Every day is a struggle.

Said set out for the United States with the goal of getting a job, so he could support his family in Somalia. Instead—to his surprise—when he arrived in California, he was handcuffed, put in leg restraints and sent to a Texas detention center because he had 'no papers.' "I did not realize I had to have papers," he said. "What kind of papers?"

After spending several months in detention, Said was released in March and arrived at La Posada. So far, he has no attorney, no money, but he says his dreams are free—almost every night he dreams of becoming an American citizen and helping his family. He

is willing to work to reach that goal.

Our shared purpose – yours and ours – is to help Said reach his dreams. Said is why La Posada is here. And when we have helped him, someone new will come with that same dream.

Thanks to you, we will be here for every 'Said' Providence sends our way.



Grants Awarded Since July 1, 2009

- Texas Emergency Shelter Grant Program (FYE 2010) — \$71,614
- Texas Emergency Shelter Grant Program (Additional Award, FYE 2009) — \$3,460
- Texas Emergency Shelter Grant Program (Additional Award, FYE 2008) — \$21,469
- James R. Dougherty Jr. Foundation — \$1,000
- Raskob Foundation — \$9,000
- Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods — \$1,000
- Lower Rio Grande Development Council — \$4,950
- AEP — \$2,294
- Kenedy Memorial Foundation. — \$5,000
- Cameron Foundation — \$2,500
- Porticus North America Foundation. — \$21,000
- Scanlan Foundation — \$7,500
- Rachael & Ben Vaughan Foundation — \$5,500
- LCWR Border Fund — \$3,000
- Holy Spirit Foundation — \$2,584

Tending Body and Soul

The Old Testament tells us, "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels." Hospitality is the foundation of La Posada's mission. We are grateful to share this ministry with two newcomers to the shelter.

Joseph Rodriguez-Gonzalez, a former client from Cuba, is our chef.



He works part time, planning and preparing delicious, healthy and innovative meals for the clients and staff, making use of food bank offerings and the bounty from our garden. That alone would win

him a place in heaven, but in addition, he volunteers his afternoons working the garden and helping with technology issues.

Claudia Avila is new to the Rio Grande Valley. She emigrated from Mexico to Chicago and devoted herself to keeping Mexican culture alive in the large Mexican population there. She moved to our area in November when she married a man who is a hospital chaplain at Valley Baptist Medical Center. She applied for the part-time cook position now held by Joseph, but did not have a Social Se-



curity number because she is only on a working Visa. Claudia is volunteering while she is in the legal process, coming every day, Monday through Thursday. She takes pride and pleasure in preparing and sharing some of her favorite recipes.

Touching the World ... One Person at a Time

They come from different backgrounds, with different skill sets and different motivations, but all our volunteers have one important thing in common: they share their gifts to help others succeed. Alice and Maricarmen spend their time at La Posada Providencia tutoring clients, primarily in English. Yoanki, a former client now earning a degree in facilities management, maintains and repairs the buildings, grounds and equipment. They are three of our most devoted volunteers.

Maricarmen Justo-Graña is La Posada's newest English tutor. Born in Mexico, she has lived in Texas for 24 years. Maricarmen previously owned a restaurant in the Harlingen area which had employed several clients from La Posada. Now that she no longer works at the restaurant, she has time to volunteer and decided she wanted to work one-one-one with individuals in need, doing something that really made a difference. "I feel that what I am doing is helping people achieve what they want for their lives," she said.

Alice Maedge is a "Winter Texan" – a Missourian who spends her winters in Texas. She met Program



Alice invited Michael and Abdull for a farewell celebration at her RV.

Director Sr. Zita Telkamp after Mass one morning, and Sr. Zita promptly told Alice all about the shelter and its mission. Alice volunteered to tutor every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. She was very faithful in that service, working with several

clients, until she and her husband, Bill, returned home in March. They have both promised to return next winter – and we look forward to it!

Yoanki Hernandez Levya attends college in Pittsburgh, but he spends many of his school breaks,

including summer, at La Posada. He has saved the shelter thousands of dollars in repair and construction costs by installing bathroom fixtures, water heaters, a kitchen exhaust and other essential equipment. He ensures that all the machinery at the shelter is in good operating order and painted the dining room and kitchen. He also helps with transportation.



Maricarmen helps Said with his English to prepare him for finding a job.



Yoanki working with the wood chipper, acquired through the generosity of the Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

Farewell and Godspeed ...

We were blessed to have two remarkable young women at La Posada Providencia during the first months of this year. **Sister Bertshabe Palomino Montalvo**, a novice with the Sisters of Divine Providence, the community of women religious that sponsors La Posada, spent three months at the shelter gaining ministry experience – all kinds of experience! Sr. Betsa welcomed, tutored, chauffeured, mentored, cooked, baked, weeded, cleaned, and fed the cats and the chickens. A native Peruvian, Sr. Betsa understands our client's struggles with a new culture and new language. She is a compassionate listener, open to everyone. She puts her whole heart into everything she does.

Jensy is a 19-year-old from Guatemala, who was released from detention and arrived at La Posada on December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Among Jensy's many dreams and goals is to speak English fluently. Since the beginning of January, every Monday thru Thursday morning she attended ESL class at the Harlingen Literacy Center; in the afternoons, she studied two to four hours either by herself or with **Sister Thérèse Cunningham, SHSp**, our client mentor or with Sr. Betsa. On February 11th, we were thrilled to learn that Jensy received both asylum and legal permanent residency. She departed a few days later to join family in Missouri.

Both of these young women endeared themselves to us with their warm and frequent smiles, their shared eagerness to learn, their willingness to work hard and help others, and their faith and trust in God. We will miss them, but we know each will be successful in their future journeys as they discern God's path for them.



Jensy, left, spent hours each day honing her English skills. Sister Bertshabe Palomino Montalvo has the patience of a saint and the humor of a school girl.

*Your gift enables people like Jensy, Abdull, and Said to create New Beginnings for themselves.
Please use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.LPPshelter.org.*

Thank you!

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