

Vive, Inc.



50 Wyoming Avenue Buffalo NY 14215

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URGENT INFORMATION

*This is being sent to Western New York religious communities. For more information contact:
Ron Smith, Director or Rev. John R. Long, former Director -- 15 December 2004*

Refugee Challenge + Financial Challenge + How you can help

Refugee Challenge

VIVE is right now coping with a backlog of refugees exceeding 800 people with over 100 more people arriving each day. These are men, women, and many children, fleeing war and persecution all over the world. Many are victims of torture. They are pressing forward to Buffalo to apply for admission to Canada before 29 December when Canada's availability for refugees will be reduced significantly.

On 29 December Canada will begin to implement an agreement with the U.S. known as "safe third country". Once that goes into effect, only unaccompanied minors, refugees with close family in Canada, and a few others, will be able to apply to Canada. All the others will have to apply in the U.S. Many will apply in Buffalo, which may in the long run provide revitalization for the City.

VIVE's work will change radically to provide screening and advice for refugees as to which country they should apply in, to assist refugees with U.S. asylum applications, and to help them survive in Western New York for the period they are prohibited from working or receiving benefits.

Financial Challenge

In the midst of assisting the refugees who have turned to VIVE in such great numbers, VIVE just found that its Erie County funding has been ***totally eliminated*** from the budget recently passed. VIVE had been assured it was included in the "red budget" although at a reduced amount, and it was included in the "green budget." However, the last minute negotiations that allowed \$12 million of sales tax money to be shared with the City and municipalities, removed VIVE from the budget altogether. This amounts to a reduction of \$145,000 from total VIVE funding of only \$674,000.

What you can do to help

First-- Spread the word. Please share this information with your leadership and congregations and with others who will also be concerned.

Second-- Help VIVE with emergency funding. Help us keep going, to care for the refugees already here, and to reorganize our work to help those who will be coming to face the new situation after 29 December.

Third – Invite capable people to volunteer to help register and orient refugees, particularly in the late afternoon and early evening. People with Spanish and French language capability are particularly valuable.

Fourth -- Contact County Executive Joel Giambra and your legislator to get them to find replacement funding. A few lines saying “Please find at least \$145,000 in replacement funds for VIVE to provide for the care of hundreds of refugees already here and to allow for their future care in 2005.” [See addresses below]

Fifth -- Rejoice with us, and see VIVE first-hand. Come to our open house, Sunday, 9 January 2005 from noon to 4pm.

THANK YOU

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Contact Joel Giambra, Erie County Executive
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Your County Legislator
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Buffalo, NY 14202

Phone: 858-7500
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www.erie.gov/legislature
(e-mail link)