



Providing basic provisions to refugees and asylum seekers  
on the southern border during Sukkot



Working in partnership to bring this program to our community

# How can we help refugees and asylum seekers —mainly women and children — at the southern border?



*One Mitzvah One Community* is designed to supply needed toiletries and writing implements to the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) of San Antonio, TX, for inclusion in the backpack kits they distribute to hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers—mainly women and children—each week. The kit-packing and associated programming will be designed to take place during the holiday of Sukkot.



Overcrowding of families observed by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) on June 10, 2019, at Border Patrol's McAllen, TX, Station. Photo Credit: Office of Inspector General/Department of Homeland Security.



# Who Will Receive These Backpacks?

“All of the backpacks are given out in San Antonio - the Greyhound bus station and the SA International Airport. We have trained, and mostly bilingual, volunteers who are stationed 7 days a week at these locations to assist our migrants. All of the migrants we assist are “in the system.” They have left detention centers or have been delivered to SA after being processed through ICE. All have sponsors who are waiting for them somewhere in the US. We also have an overnight shelter at Travis Park Church. For awhile we had hundreds staying there every night. All of these guests receive backpacks, as well.”

Quote from a representative of the IWC in San Antonio





# Goals of One Mitzvah One Community

Through this initiative, synagogues, schools, and organizations across the greater Chicago area will have opportunities to:

- **Provide much needed basic supplies to asylum seekers.**
- **Build relationships** among people of all ages as they learn together, gather supplies, and pack toiletry and writing kits.
- **Deepen Jewish learning** and provide connections between Jewish wisdom and lived values through educational materials and experiences specifically designed to highlight the themes of Sukkot, our responsibility to help others, and the current humanitarian crisis.
- **Offer a timely, new mitzvah project** that can be extended throughout the year.

# Who Does What?

## Marshall Center & HIAS

- ▶ Supply packing lists and mailing addresses
- ▶ Provide tips for collecting and packing
- ▶ Develop an Amazon Wish List prototype for online collections
- ▶ Create and post related lessons and text sheets to JTeach.org
- ▶ Post samples for a letter writing campaign
- ▶ Design customizable event flyers for your organization
- ▶ Set up a Google doc for information sharing (shipping, purchasing, etc.)

**All of the items listed in this column will be available to registered organizations on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>.**

## Your Organization

- ▶ Advertise event
- ▶ Collect supplies (donations of items/money to buy items)
- ▶ Pick a packing day during Sukkot (or right before 😊)
- ▶ Use our lessons and text sheets to help participants make connections between Sukkot, helping the stranger, and packing supplies
- ▶ Pack and ship the boxes
- ▶ Let **Linda Sonin** know by August 19<sup>th</sup> if your synagogue / organization will be a part of *One Mitzvah One Community!*

# What Gets Packed?

Pack as many or as few bags as your organization is comfortable assembling. There is no minimum or maximum.

## Toiletries

(put in quart size Ziploc bag):

- ▶ 2 toothbrushes (individually wrapped)
- ▶ 1 travel size toothpaste
- ▶ 1 package of hand wipes
- ▶ 2 packages of travel size tissues
- ▶ 3 hair elastics or scrunchies
- ▶ Small comb

## Essentials

(put in a sandwich size Ziploc):

- ▶ 2 pens
- ▶ 1 small note pad
- ▶ Box of crayons (8-12) to a pack

### IMPORTANT

**Pack bags only with the items that appear on the above lists. ICW will include these bags in the backpacks they distribute.**



# Why Sukkot?

On the intermediate days of Sukkot, the Torah reading begins with a conversation between God and Moses. Moses asks God who will be with him as he leads. God replies, *And He said, "I will go in the lead and will lighten your burden"* (Exodus 33:14).

Like the Children of Israel as they traversed the desert, the burden of the migrants on the southern border is great. They are in an unknown place that could afford them great promise. They are in temporary quarters. They are unsure when they will get provisions.

We cannot change the realities of the situation but we can lighten their burden as they are in the fragile place of the wandering exile.







# Next Steps

**Register your synagogue / school / organization**  
**to be a part of *One Mitzvah One Community!***

***Benefits for participating groups include:***

- *Your organization's name will be listed on publicity materials*
- *Updates and links to downloadable materials will be sent directly to you*
- *Participating organizations will receive a beautiful certificate of participation*



## What else?

For more information about the IWC go to:

<https://interfaithwelcomecoalition.org/>

Questions / comments?

Contact Linda Sonin at [Linda@bjechicago.org](mailto:Linda@bjechicago.org)

## **This just in!**

- ▶ Our partners at HIAS are looking for additional ways that we can help asylum seekers and refugees. As they develop leads, we will forward them to all participating organizations.