

Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church!

Thank you to all who helped with the collection of items and assembling of the Welcome Bags for the Lutheran Services of Florida Dream Center. We brought over 60 bags of items for the teenagers at the Dream Center. The workers at the Dream Center were so appreciative of the bags! The youth are unaccompanied minors from the border, mostly from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Once they leave the border they are brought to the Dream Center to await placement with sponsors or family members already in the country. There are over 400 of these centers across the U.S. Florida has at least four centers around the state. The center currently can house 60 teenagers but the government has asked for them to be able to hold 80 so they are working through the process to be able to house more youth.



Bag Packing - Front row: Cindy, Bonnie, Irene, Marty, Coleen, PrAshley, Back row: Debi, Sue, Jan, Tonia, Addi, Susie



Dream Center teacher, Colleen, PrAshley, Rick, Jenny - a director at the Dream Center, Ross - a director of LSF

A few of us toured the center. It was amazing to see it. Throughout the day the teenagers are in small groups for school mostly to learn English. They were very happy and proud to show off their English skills to us. It was heart-warming to hear how with a group of 48 teenagers there are little to no behavioral issues. These youth are so happy to be in the U.S. Seeing their excitement brought a new appreciation for the U.S. for me. When we've lived in the U.S. our entire lives, we can easily take it for granted.



There are inspirational sayings on the walls throughout the center. The outdoor space includes soccer nets, disc golf baskets, gym machines, and picnic tables. They are in the process of building a multi-purpose court with basketball hoops with the help of St. Armand's Key Lutheran Church. They also have dreams of a \$100,000 large multi-purpose outdoor lanai type structure. They currently have \$25,000 pledged from donors for it. If anyone is interested in helping, please let me know and I can get you in touch with the right folks.

St. Paul continues to also support Alta Vista Elementary School with Walmart Gift Cards for the teachers to prepare their classrooms for the new school year. Please bring in gift cards or financial donations by the end of the month. The teachers are very grateful for our help!



Friday, July 30, is the last day for Christine Merrill, director of our Early Childhood Learning Center. At 10am, an ice cream truck will be at the ECLC to give treats to the kids. It's a great time to come by the church if you want to see Christine and wish her well. There will be a basket for cards. I hope many can attend to show St. Paul's appreciation for her ministry with us. She will be missed.

Take care and God bless!

-PrAshley

