



Spotlight: Good Shepherd Services Atlanta Community-Focused – Safe Space for Asian Immigrants

Stereotypes are not necessarily accurate. And they can breed resentment, mistrust, hatred. When Sr. Christine Truong, RGS, arrived in Atlanta in 1993, she discovered an increasing number of impoverished and vulnerable immigrants and refugees from Asia who were adrift in a world where few spoke their language.

Today, Good Shepherd Services Atlanta (GSSA) reaches out to the poor, counsels families and youths at risk, offers translations, conducts citizenship classes, promotes cultural enrichment, and provides elderly services.

The staff serves refugees and immigrants experiencing psychological, social, legal, and family difficulties and, through prevention, intervention, outreach, and community building, the staff helps these men, women and children achieve self-reliance and become contributing members of American society.

In the process, GSSA has developed a good relationship with immigration offices and the police department. The police know of GSSA and they know Sr. Christine.

While GSSA offers support services to all immigrants, they primarily work with families from Asia, in particular people from Burma

(Myanmar), Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.



Sr. Christine and her staff are trusted faces and the agency a place of welcome. Often, women reach out who are experiencing domestic violence or who are being trafficked. Women who have been trafficked initially fear the police and usually don't speak English. Many were lured to the U.S. in search of work, but soon find upon arrival that their documents have been seized by their traffickers or their husbands. GSSA serves as a victim liaison, providing translation help, and finding free lawyers, counseling and letters of support.

"I reach out to people and when there is some problem in the family, they call me. We create a

safe place for people to come here and share their pain,” said Sr. Christine.

Good Shepherd Services Atlanta adroitly adapts to the changing needs of its community members. And since COVID-19, the Asian community of Atlanta has seen increasing numbers of racially motivated verbal attacks and physical assaults.

Most of the Asians being targeted are the most vulnerable. They are poor, uneducated, and new to the United States. They cannot speak English well enough to respond and don't understand the system to seek intervention.



“All lives are sacred. We are all God’s children. As long as we keep hating, this virus will spread. But it won’t be the coronavirus. It is worse than that. It will be a virus of hate and violence that

we won’t be able to stop. We have got to start loving one another,” Sr. Christine said.



GSSA’s emphasis on the individual and his or her needs puts these new immigrants and refugees first. Services include immigration services, professional counseling, DUI programming, domestic violence intervention and anger management programs, translation services, citizenship prep classes, child care classes, public assistance support, summer programming for children, community services, and more. Whatever is needed.

Good Shepherd Services Atlanta serves refugees and immigrants regardless of ethnicity, gender or religious belief - providing programs that bring hope, restore dignity, and improve their quality of life.

<https://www.goodshepherdatl.org>

The National Advocacy Center (NAC) is the voice and lobbying arm of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd religious community, staff members, and clients in their ministries and agencies across the country. NAC empowers and is the voice for those on the margin of society and works to lessen their burdens through policy.