

Good afternoon,

My name is Maria Fe Lizarzaburu. I am Identity's Newcomers Program Manager.

I am here today to share a little about how Identity and the Newcomers Initiative have been assisting new arrivals families and individuals in Montgomery County. Our mission is clear. We support immigrant families who have fled their homes due to economic, political, and violence-related issues, transition into stable situations for them to adapt more successfully to living in the US.

Let me share one of the many stories with you:

This is the story of a family of four, two adults, and two children, forced to leave their homeland due to political persecution and violence. They took a leap of faith and crossed the border in search of safety and opportunity. They were detained by immigration and sent to Washington, DC with the promise of a friend would shelter them. However, upon arriving in D.C the friend could not follow through on their promise, leaving the family stranded. The family found refuge in Samu, the Respite Center in Montgomery County, where they received not only shelter but also the support they needed.

With the guidance of an Identity case manager, they started piecing their lives back together. The case manager worked with the family providing direct resources and connecting them with the Newcomers Network in the county. Helping them in the search for more stable and affordable housing and providing financial assistance to pay part of the rent for them to move from the shelter. Identity was there every step of the way assisting family with necessities such as food, personal hygiene products, and essentials for the children were provided. We also enrolled the parents in Montgomery Cares, in person and online ESOL classes, provided a phone and a computer. We connected them to "CASA de Maryland" to get Casa ID and Catholic Charities to receive legal assistance. The children were enrolled in the school and Care for Kids program and continue attending regularly.

In our follow up with the family they reported that one of the adults has found employment. They are paying on time the rent and utilities and they feel financially stable. The family is incredibly grateful for the assistance they have received, and their story is just one of many success stories that highlight how the county and the community-based organization responded to the arrival of newcomers in the area.

This work and the lives of many immigrant families cannot happen without the County's support. While Identity and our sister organizations raise private funds to support this work, the County's funds provide the core funding.

On behalf of the families we work with, we want to thank you for your past support and to urge you to please continue to fund it.

Thank you very much.