

## **The Overground Railroad**

Grannies Respond, a group that originated in Beacon, NY, is now working nationwide to help relieve the trauma experienced by legal asylum seekers at the southern border. Named the Overground Railroad, the group is creating a network of “relief stations” at Greyhound bus stations where asylum seekers, having had their “credible fear” interview and being released by ICE, are legally transiting to their sponsors to await their scheduled asylum hearing.

These migrants have been traveling for days on the buses from places like El Paso, Texas or Phoenix, Arizona and have run out of initial supplies, if they had any to start. They are hungry, thirsty, dirty, tired, and cold. Many are traveling with babies or young children. They have little or no American money and difficulty navigating the complex nationwide bus system in a foreign language.

Volunteers meet buses in places like Dallas, Louisville, Columbus, Sacramento, Detroit, etc., with a welcoming smile, ticketing and transfer assistance (in Spanish, French, and other languages as needed), and an array of supplies: food, water, clean underwear and socks, diapers, books and toys, blankets, toiletries, and over-the-counter medication if needed.

I have volunteered at the bus station in Columbus, Ohio and will be returning for another week in mid-October, 2019.

Helping in Mexico:

There is also a group in Brownsville, Texas, which cooks hot dinners five days a week, which they then across across the bridge to Matamoros, Mexico and distribute to the hundreds forced to wait on the Mexican side of the border for their scheduled asylum hearing. Some wait on line for months, with no place to sleep, and eventually with no food or funds. Team Brownsville provides tents for families when funds allow. Teachers and librarians from Brownsville and Matamoros have created a Sunday morning school where they teach English and geography to the children, as well as offering a lending library for the children.

I will be volunteering with Team Brownsville in November/December 2019.