

Idaho Community Action Network

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PressRelease

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WELCOMING IDAHO INITIATIVE LAUNCHES WITH MESSAGES ON BOISE BUS BENCHES:

“I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME”

Leaders from religious, humanrights communities unveil new project to combat fear and hatred toward newcomers, promote Idaho values of acceptance, opportunity and respect

Boise, ID.—On Tuesday, partners from Idaho’s church and human rights communities launched the **WelcomingIdahoInitiative** with a press conference in Boise to unveil a new ad campaign. The new ads, which appeared on bus benches around Boise Tuesday morning, feature two basic messages:

- “Immigration is an American experience. Acceptance is an American value”; and
- “I was a stranger and you welcomed me”

Partners in the initiative include the Idaho Community Action Network, Catholic Charities of Idaho, the Idaho Human Rights Education Center, and the Idaho Peace Coalition. Steering committee members also include Mayor Tom Dale of Nampa, Dr. Robert McCarl, Ed Keener and Gladys Esquibel.

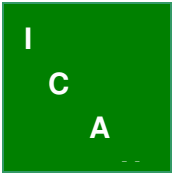
“I was a stranger and you welcomed me,” read the Rev. Thomas Faucher, invoking the well-known passage from Matthew 25. “This simple message is a call to duty for people of faith everywhere. It reminds us that it is our responsibility as members of a community not to simply ‘look out for number one,’ but to look out for all of God’s children.”

The **WelcomingIdahoInitiative** seeks to counter a climate of fear and intolerance toward newcomers and immigrants fueled by inflammatory talk radio and recent rounds of immigration raids, including one in the Magic Valley last Tuesday night. “The climate of fear is taking its toll, hurting immigrants and diminishing us all,” said Amy Herzfeld. “When people don’t feel safe going to bed in their own homes for fear of a raid, when parents are afraid to get in the car and drive to work or to the grocery store, when children are afraid to go to school because of the bullying and name-calling they will endure, we must take action to put an end to this climate of fear.”

For more information, please contact

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“The values of our communities are welcoming values, values like acceptance, opportunity and fairness,” said Dr. Robert McCarl. “It’s time to restore the public conversation about immigration to a place of mutual respect, so people in our communities can live without fear and public policies can be developed in an environment of empathy and reason, not empty rhetoric.”

The **Welcoming Idaho Initiative** will build on its kick-off ad campaign and continue to promote Idaho’s welcoming values of acceptance, opportunity and respect through public education and community contact, including billboard advertising in the Magic Valley and community meetings to take place across Southern Idaho in the months to come.

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