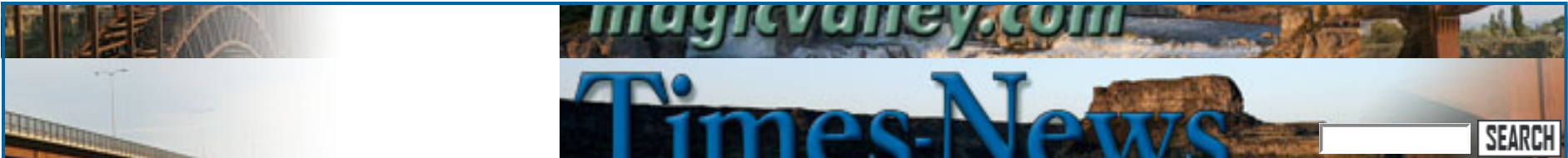


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New campaign designed to welcome immigrants to Idaho

BOISE, Idaho - Human rights and religious groups are launching an ad campaign designed to welcome strangers to southern Idaho and serve as a counterbalance to immigration raids and anti-immigration sentiment nationwide.

The ads will initially appear on 10 bus benches in the Boise area and a billboard posted between the southern Idaho cities of Jerome and Burley. The campaign features two messages: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me," a biblical quote, and the statement "Immigration is an American experience. Acceptance is an American value."

Rev. Thomas Faucher, of St. Mary's Catholic Church, in Boise, says his parish continues to grow, thanks to the influx of immigrants.

"We become better by welcoming them," Faucher said. "That's precisely what happened to my ancestors when they came from France, and when they came from Ireland, and when they came from Canada."

Organizers, including the Idaho Human Rights Education Center and the Idaho Citizens Action Network, hope to expand the campaign statewide.

Amy Herzfeld, executive director of the Idaho Human Rights Education Center, said the campaign will run for a year. It is paid for by donations and modeled after campaigns in Tennessee and Iowa.

Its launch coincides with the intensifying of anti-immigration rhetoric in national debates and federal immigration sweeps this week in the Magic Valley. In the last week, U.S. Border Patrol agents confirmed they arrested about 100 illegal aliens as part of a human smuggling sting.

Information from: The Spokesman-Review, <http://www.spokesmanreview.com>

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