



Border Awareness Experience Information Packet

Thank you for your interest in our Border Awareness Experience, a program run by the members of the Missionary Society of St. Columban in the U.S. and Mexico.

At the Columban Mission Center in El Paso, Texas, we offer exposure programs to visiting groups and facilitate their contact with organizations and institutions related to U.S./ Mexico border issues — poverty, migration, ecology and human rights.

Columban missionaries live and serve the people of God in both Juarez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas. We stand with the poor, the migrant, and the victim of violence, living out our faith in the practice of ecological and social justice.

Inside this packet you will find...

- a description of the Border Awareness Experience and reflections from past participants,
- a sample schedule, and
- information on how to schedule your own visit.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know at cmc@columban.org

Peace,

Fr. Bob Mosher, SSC
Director, Columban Mission Center



Program Description & Reflections

The visit of a group from Seattle, Washington, will serve as an example of the Border Awareness Experience (BAE) program. The nine adult members of this group, all leaders in their faith community, visited sites in both El Paso, Texas, and the neighboring city of Juarez, of the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

In El Paso, the participants heard from and dialogued with representatives of the Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services of El Paso, the U.S. Border Patrol and the Annunciation House shelter for undocumented migrants. They also observed processes of the Federal Immigration Courts, and prepared a meal at the Columban Mission Center for about 60 migrating people staying at Annunciation House, which first opened its doors in 1978. The migrants and refugees easily relate to the program participants in

this kind of setting, and sometimes tell their stories of journeys lasting thousands of miles.



Border delegation visits the the scholarship and tutoring program El Buen Pastor

On the Juarez side of the Rio Grande, in Mexico, the participants visited a clinic for special-needs children and their families, the Clínica Santo Niño de Atocha, as well as the classrooms of the scholarship and tutoring program El Buen Pastor which serve the academic needs of roughly 450 children and young adults from the poor, working-class area of Rancho Anapra, where Columban Fathers and Lay Missioners from a variety of countries live and work.

The group, traveling in a rented van, also visited the Casa Tabor community and met Father Peter Hindes, O.Carm., and Sister Betty Campbell, R.S.M., two U.S. consecrated Catholics who shared the richness of their experiences in Latin America, promoting human rights under oppressive regimes during the latter half of the 20th century, and helped the group analyze current social

injustices. They also toured one of the approximately 450 maquiladores, or assembly plants, that international companies have established in Juarez since the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), seeing first-hand the workers and their workplace conditions in this Mexican border city, and hearing from them about their wages, their needs and their hopes.

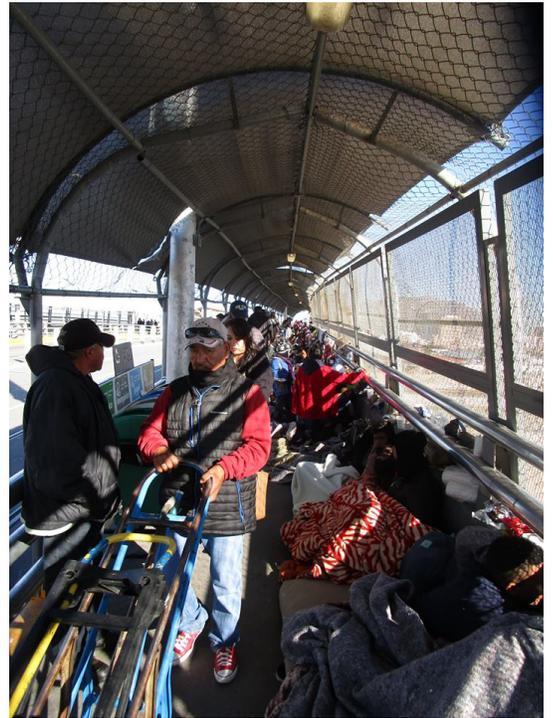
The Columban Mission Center was the visiting group's home for the weeklong experience, providing space for facilitated shared reflection at the end of each day. The century-old two-story stucco and brick building provided an insulated ambience of sustainability and coolness in the desert environment, with recycled furnishings and flooring, a 22-panel solar energy system and turbine fans in the attic to expel the heated air. Water conservation practices were encouraged and explained, and the opportunity to occasionally work in the nearby Magoffin Community Garden were provided.

The meditative Migrants' Way of the Cross up to the top of Mt. Cristo Rey, a short distance from El Paso, is always a popular activity for younger groups, but adult groups like the one from Seattle also enjoyed it, keeping a silent, reflective air during their climb to the summit, and then breaking into laughter and loud conversations on the way back down — the whole experience filling up a morning.

The program organizers included direct-service activities during the week, as well, such as bringing towels and sheets from any of a dozen 'hospitality sites' in El Paso to a local laundromat, and serving meals to the resident refugees and migrants, who need a place to contact relatives and rest for a day or two after their release from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security agencies that initiate and process their asylum petitions or requests for legal status.

But the emphasis is on another kind of service—the 'service of presence', that allows the people who are escaping poverty and violence to touch our lives and teach us about the experience of forced migration, opening our eyes and our hearts to the human dimension of immigration issues. In this way, the Border Awareness Experience refrains from promoting a deceptive self-appreciation for the participants themselves about how they may feel they helped others in need, and instead transforms the participants into witnesses of a new truth that they must now acknowledge and give witness to, when they return to their homes and friends.

Such an experience led several participants in this Seattle group to adjust their perspectives, and make new fundamental decisions about their lives' work and direction—one took several years to join a program that brought her to a village in Guatemala, and another decided to become a legal advocate for migrants. Fundraising events also followed the trip, to aid the shelters back in El Paso, and contacts with some



Migrants are denied their legal right to request asylum protections and are then forced to wait on an international bridge for several days before an agent will process their claim

of the residents in Rancho Anapra were maintained. In this way, the program was less a scrapbook experience that the beginning of new commitments after the return home.

One participant in this group wrote at the end of the week: 'Education and first-hand interaction with the people of the Borderlands is indeed what our participants experienced.' "I am changed," wrote another. When workplace raids by the Immigrant and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on Seattle-area factories that hired undocumented migrants occurred later on, the group was prepared to actively share their new perspectives and insights with their own faith community and other networking organizations, advocating in new ways for the local migrant community and visiting the detained.

Why can tell what this experience will eventually mean for your own community? How could it mark the personal lives and histories of participants like yourself? Come on down, and let's find out.



Border delegation serves supper to migrants at a local hospitality shelter



Sample Schedule

A University Delegation

Day 1: Friday

- 12:47 p.m.—Arrival, flight UA 3553 at El Paso
- 3 p.m.—Orientation
- 4 p.m.—Visit to Murchison Park overlook
- 5 p.m.—Supper at Don Cuco's Taquería
- 6 p.m.—Tour of University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) campus
- 7 p.m.—Group Reflection on day

Day 2: Saturday

- 8 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9 a.m.—Departure in van, tour of Segundo Barrio (Second Ward)
- 10:30 a.m.—Visit to La Frontera Farmworkers' Center, Carlos Marentes, director
- 12 noon—Lunch, Return to the Columban Mission Center (CMC)
- 2:15 p.m.—Departure in van to press conference at Border Network for Human Rights (BNHR)
- 3:30 p.m.—Conversation with Robert Heyman on the work of BNHR
- 4 p.m.—Return to the CMC
- 6 p.m.—Supper
- 7 p.m.—Group Reflection

Day 3: Sunday

- 8 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9 a.m.—Departure in van
- 10 a.m.—Sunday Mass in Corpus Christi parish, Rancho Anapra, Mexico
- 12 noon—Lunch
- 1 p.m.—Visit to health clinic of Doctor Sanjuana Mendoza, in Rancho Anapra, Mexico
- 2 p.m.—Visit to Cathedral Plaza, Juarez
- 3 p.m.—Departure in van, return to El Paso, USA
- 5 p.m.—Arrival

- 6 p.m.—Supper
- 7 p.m.—Reflection on day

Day 4: Monday

- 8 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9 a.m.—Departure to Border Fence in Anapra, N.M.
- 9:30 a.m.—Meditation
- 10 a.m.—Departure in van, visit to Holy Cross Retreat Center, Mesilla Park, N.M., meeting with Jorge Taborda, hospitality beneficiary
- 12 noon—Lunch
- 1 p.m.—Return to the CMC
- 1:45 p.m.—Departure in van to the Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services (DMRS), Ana Heys, deputy director
- 3 p.m.—Return to the CMC
- 4 p.m.—Presentation by Molly Molloy of New Mexico State University (NMSU), Las Cruces, N.M., on the violence in Mexico
- 6 p.m.—Supper prepared by undocumented refugee at the CMC
- 7 p.m.—Reflection on day

Day 5: Tuesday

- 7:30 a.m.—Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m.—Departure in van to Mexico
- 9 a.m.—Visit to Casa Tabor, presentation by Father Peter Hinds and Sister Betty Campbell
- 10 a.m.—Departure
- 11 a.m.—Visit to Clínica Santo Niño de Atocha in Rancho Anapra for special-needs children and their families
- 12 noon—Departure for lunch
- 2 p.m.—Visit to Biblioteca Infantil El Buen Pastor in Rancho Anapra, directed by Cristina Estrada
- 4 p.m.—Return to El Paso
- 6:30 p.m.—Fiesta for the Feast of the Epiphany (Tres Reyes) with the Young Adult Missioners of El Paso at the CMC
- 9 p.m.—Reflection on day

Day 6: Wednesday

- 8 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9 a.m.-12 noon—Work in hospitality centers for refugees
- 12 noon—Lunch, rest
- 3 p.m.—6 p.m.—Work in hospitality centers for refugees
- 6 p.m.—Supper
- 7 p.m.—Reflection on day

Day 7: Thursday

- 8 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9 a.m.—Planning and shopping for evening meal
- 11 a.m.—Tour of Annunciation House
- 12 noon—Lunch
- 2 p.m.—Presentation by Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee (DMSC) at the CMC (with other visiting group on their BAE)
- 4 p.m.—Preparation of meal and dining area
- 6 p.m.—Supper with Annunciation House guests
- 8 p.m.—Cleanup
- 9 p.m.—Reflection on day

Day 8: Friday

- 8 a.m.—Breakfast
- 9 a.m.—Final evaluation and reflections on the BAE
- 11 a.m.—Departure in van
- 1:18 p.m.—UA flight 4462 departure from El Paso



More Information

For more information about the Columban Mission Center and our programming, please contact Fr. Bob Mosher, Director.

Email: cmc@columban.org

Phone: 915-351-1153

Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/columbanmissioncenter

You can find photographs posted about the different groups that have participated in this program here, under "Photos" and "Albums".

Home Organization's Website

www.columban.org

Explore the work of the Missionary Society of St. Columban and see our particular page under "Get Involved" >>> "Columban Mission Center."



Columban Fathers
Missionary Society of St. Columban