

Indiana AID

THE INSIDE VIEW

November 2023 / Vol 7

Whispers in the Wind

The poem below was shared by one of our detained partners, written for his children.

~~~~WHISPERS IN THE WIND~~~~

Hey, it's late! what are you doing still awake?

Ha! no worries, it's ok.

I know you miss me so,

I left something for you out there  
can you see it?

Look! up there, in the sky  
there is a bright moon tonight!  
next to the moon there is a little light,  
you might think is Venus but,  
it could be me in heart and soul  
watching over you my dear child.  
Don't be sorry , don't be sad  
cause through Venus and the moon  
I'll send you hugs and kisses  
from the bottom of my heart!

Hey! I can't see a single star now,  
but a giant gloomy cloud  
now I think it's gonna rain  
'cause it starts to hurt my brain  
(Whispers in the wind of weeping  
doubts)

Just one question , if I dare...  
so, no more kisses before bed?

*continued on page 3 -->*

## A real life "INSIDE VIEW"

In August, a team of Indiana AID volunteers made the drive to Brazil, IN to have our first ever in-person glimpse into the workings of the Clay County jail.

This community stakeholder meeting was a multi-year process in the making, with the pandemic closing the jail to all outside visitors; previous requests being denied; and engaging an ICE official to assist in the coordination. We are especially grateful to Pastor Brian Bither for his diligence and follow-through that resulted in this meeting occurring.

The team of volunteers met ahead of time to plan through how to make the most of the visit, crafting a list of questions, noting areas of concern, and a plan to request to speak with some of our detained partners. We weren't sure how we were going to be received, whether we'd be welcomed or treated as intruders, so we wanted to go in with a plan in mind.

We were pleasantly surprised to learn that we would meet with Clay County's sheriff, the jail commander and assistant commander, and an ICE liaison. They'd set aside the majority of the day to provide us a tour of the facility, answer our questions, and arrange interviews with various detained individuals. We greatly appreciated their time and willingness to speak openly with us, while we also recognize that we are at odds in our end goals. One of the staff stated their openness to speak with us came from having common ground - that "we all want happy inmates." However, that is not the goal of Indiana AID, which is to see immigration detention abolished while ending the isolation of the people currently in the system, as stated by our member network, Freedom for Immigrants.

*More details about the jail visit on the next page.*

## Monthly reports from the last few months

### August

- Commissary totals: \$940.80
- Books: \$148.90
- Visits: 20

### September

- Commissary totals: \$1456.00
- Books: \$243.70
- Visits: 14

### October

- Commissary totals: \$828.80
- Books: \$90.71
- Visits: 7

## The “Inside View” continued

The tour of the facility was eye-opening. We saw one wing of the facility where there are two blocks for male detainees. Elsewhere in the facility there is one block for women. The blocks are arranged like wedges of a pie. The central, open space is the command center of that wing, where jail staff are stationed and monitor the inmates. Inmates are separated by their classification. Most ICE detainees are classified as low to low-moderate, so they are in cells with four beds, a shower, a toilet, and a shared open space in the block. One hall in the wing holds the kitchen, laundry, and medical spaces. There is no access to outdoor recreation time. The inmates can access a multipurpose room for 1 hour a day if they sign up, where there is a grate that can be opened for fresh air and sun, and which has a piece of workout equipment.

We were able to ask detailed questions of the jail staff around the following topics, which will assist us to better understand the workings of the jail, to educate new partners as to their rights and options, and to better advocate for our partners when their experiences don't line up with the stated procedures.

- Medical
- Food
- Language access
- Legal
- Recreation
- Cleaning and laundry
- The release process
- Transfer/Deportation
- Current available programming
- Expansion plans
- Potential next steps

The sheriff shared about some changes he implemented within the jail after being elected last year, with the goal of improving morale among the inmates. Inmates receive two hot meals and one cold a day. The sheriff surveyed the inmates and, from their feedback, changed the hot meals from breakfast and lunch to lunch and dinner. Inmates are supposed to receive a tablet for personal use during the day, which can be used for communication needs, to read e-books, watch movies, etc. They must purchase headphones from the commissary to use with the tablets, which cost \$10 but are low quality. The sheriff implemented a new policy that if/when the headphones break within the first 30 days, they can be replaced for free.

We also had the opportunity to meet with a few detained individuals who had signed up to talk with us. We were able to ask them directly about their experiences in the jail, their safety, potential concerns, and more. In general, we heard that the food had improved; that, for those who had been transferred to Clay from some other detention facilities, Clay felt generally safer; and that access to/timeliness of getting medical care seemed to have improved. More than one gentleman spoke about the fact that only one guard on staff spoke Spanish, so communication barriers definitely remain. They stated their appreciation for our virtual visits and for our commissary assistance; that it meant so much to them to not feel alone.

We are grateful for the opportunity we had to see the jail firsthand, the time the jail staff provided us, and the opportunity to speak with 4 detained partners. We recognize we were provided a curated experience, that there is much we were not made privy to and there are gaps between stated procedures and inmates' daily experiences. We see this stakeholder visit as a first step in bridge-building, as it allowed us to sow the seeds for further in-person supports. This has already born fruit, as some of our volunteers were able to return this month to the jail to conduct a Bible study. We hope to grow this into a monthly occurrence and look forward to sharing more about the experience in our next newsletter.

*"Whispers in the Wind," cont. from page 1*

Don't be upset, my little one!  
as for you, and through the night...  
hugs and kisses will be raining before dawn!

Hey good morning!  
it's a beautiful day now but  
i got something to tell you...  
something that is driving me mad  
I got to fight an evil thunder  
thunderstorm as cold as "ICE"!  
strong winds are trying to take me  
and blow me away to another land,  
trying to send me abroad forever,  
far away thousands of miles!  
I could be in another Nation,  
I could be close to the beach,  
in the sand will write my lovings  
to be washed out into the Sea.  
May the Sun take all my feelings  
into a vapor cloud up right  
and be sent into the ceiling  
towards Venus, the Moon and the stars.

Please don't worry, please don't cry  
don't you dare to be stressed out  
just remember what I promised  
every time you see the stars,  
that in body , soul and spirit...  
"I'LL COME BACK" to be at your side!  
...I can tell that you still miss me  
now I'm gonna make you smile  
'cause in case you didn't see it...  
There is a bright moon in the sky!

With all my love to my beautiful kids:  
Ava Marie and Evan Angel.

Miguel

## Contact Us

- Email: [IndianaAID.contact@gmail.com](mailto:IndianaAID.contact@gmail.com)
- Phone (voicemail only): 317-721-4044

## Follow Us

- Website: <https://www.indianaaid.org>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndianaAID/>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/indianaaid/>

## Volunteer

Currently, our greatest needs are for...

- Spanish-speaking visitation partners
- Visitation partners who speak languages other than English and Spanish
- Financial support/fundraising experience
- Website and social media specialists

## Donate



<https://www.indianaaid.org/donate>

- Indiana AID is a volunteer group funded 100% on donations. Please consider a tax-deductible donation via the QR code or link above.
- Shalom Mennonite Church is our fiscal sponsor - you will be taken to their site's giving page where you will first select an amount to give and then choose the fund where you would like your money to go, "Indiana AID Fund." None of the money donated to Indiana AID goes to the church's budget.
- You can also donate by sending a check to the church with "Indiana AID" in the memo line.
  - Shalom Mennonite Church  
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