News



by Maria Benevento

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Editor's note: Welcome to NCR's Justice Action Bulletin, where every Tuesday we bring you the latest news on active nonviolence in the service of peace and justice. Do you have news you would like to share? Contact Maria Benevento at mbenevento@ncronline.org.

HOLLAND, Mich. — Four students at Hope College — a Christian school in Holland, Michigan, historically affiliated with the Reformed Church in America — created a scholarship specifically for students who benefit from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, the Holland Sentinel reported April 7.

DACA offers certain young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children without permission work permits and protection from deportation, but it has lately been threatened as President Donald Trump attempts to end the program. Students with DACA status are not eligible for federal financial aid to help them attend college.

The Hope College students — Alejandra Gómez Limón, Emily Salazar, Jonathan Mays and Jocelyn Gallegos — discovered that 161 students with DACA had been admitted

to the school since 2014, but many were unable to attend for financial reasons.

While Hope has authorized the scholarship, the students are still searching for a consistent source of funding. They are collaborating with Hope College's Scholarship Day of Giving on April 19 and will be holding a pie contest fundraiser the same day, letting students throw pies at dean of students Richard Frost, director of diversity and inclusion Vanessa Greene and associate director of student life Chris Bohle.

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — As a lawsuit brought against Orange County and the cities of Orange, Costa Mesa and Anaheim by the Orange County Catholic Worker and seven individuals experiencing homelessness continues, local governments have taken measures to clear homeless encampments and provide temporary housing while struggling to find long-term solutions.

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The lawsuit was filed after the county tried to clear a large homeless encampment near the Santa Ana riverbed without an alternative housing plan and despite the fact that anti-camping ordinances in the county's individual cities make it a crime for homeless individuals to sleep outside elsewhere.

U.S. District Court Judge David O. Carter eventually allowed the county to clear the encampment, which was estimated to house 800-1,200 people at its largest, but only if the camp's residents were offered housing in shelters or 30-day motel vouchers while the county worked to find more permanent solutions.

More recently, the Orange County Register reported April 11, Carter allowed 234 people camping in the Santa Ana Civic Center's Plaza of the Flags to be cleared and housed in shelters. Two winter shelters in the area, which typically close April 15 as the weather warms, received a 90-day extension in light of the recently cleared camps.

Long term solutions have not been as successful; according to an April 10 LA Times editorial, county supervisors scrapped a plan to build new emergency shelters in Irvine, Huntington Beach, Laguna Niguel and state-owned land in Costa Mesa after busloads of local residents protested. Carter has threatened to suspend cities' anti-camping ordinances if they don't find ways to offer housing.

NORTHAMPTON, Mass. — Irida Kakhtiranova, a Russian woman facing deportation, has taken refuge with the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence in Northampton, Massachusetts, while she fights her deportation case, the Daily Hampshire Gazette reported April 7.

Kakhtiranova entered the United States in 2003, is married to a U.S. citizen and has three children who are U.S. citizens. She works in a restaurant and is the only wage earner for her family.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a policy of not conducting enforcement actions in "sensitive locations" such as churches and schools in most circumstances.

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