

Good news from the border at last

Demetria Martinez | Sep. 20, 2010 NCR Today

The faith-based group, No More Deaths, maintains camps in Southern Arizona near the U.S.-Mexico border. Volunteers from around the country fan out each day from the camps in search of immigrants who might be lost, hungry, thirsty, injured and in danger of death. They also look for bodies of those who could not survive the perilous trek north. To help prevent deaths the group leaves bottles of water along known migrant trails.

Dan Millis is a volunteer with No More Deaths. In February 2008 he became the first volunteer to be ticketed for "littering" near the border; he was then convicted for the so-called crime. I can only imagine the shock Millis must have felt: two days before being ticketed he had found the body of a 14-year-old girl from El Salvador -- someone who might have been saved had water and help been within her reach.

But on to the good news: In a 2-1 decision the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has overturned the conviction. The Court stated that the clean bottles of drinking water placed on migrant trails could not be considered "garbage" due to their intended purpose of preventing death-by-exposure.

Let's pray that the decision is a good omen for No More Deaths and other groups working to save lives near Arizona's border with Mexico, including Humane Borders, Derechos Humanos and Los Samaritanos. According to No More Deaths statistics, more than 214 human remains have been recovered from the southern Arizona desert; 2010 may well turn out to be the deadliest year on record along the border.

For more information about the work of No More Deaths, visit www.nomoredeaths.org [1].

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[1] <http://www.nomoredeaths.org>