



Newsletter of the Center City Residents' Association

Vol. 12 No. 3 Fall 2021

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## Town Square

# Philly Grannies Respond to Asylum-Seekers' Needs

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

In the spring, Center City resident Margo Villanova and others formed the Philadelphia chapter of *Grannies Respond/Abuelas Responden*, a national organization of volunteers who provide assistance and supplies to asylum-seekers released from detention centers, traveling legally via bus to meet their families or sponsors. <https://www.granniesrespond.org/>

Volunteers in Philadelphia greet them at the bus station, and help those who are traveling to and through the Philadelphia area. Granny Greeters offer a welcoming face, assist refugees in finding their next bus, and provide basic care kits of snacks, water, juice, toiletries, diapers, and toys.

After passing an interview in the border towns with ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement), in which they establish with authorities that they have a credible fear of returning to their home country, asylees are released at the local bus stations. Volunteers with local organizations like Angry Tias and Abuelas (Angry Aunts and Grandmothers) or Catholic Charities help the asylum-seekers get a warm shower and purchase bus tickets to their next destination, where they will be met by family or sponsors. They also provide basic necessities like sandwiches, snacks, water, clothes, diapers, and formula.

Traveling by bus, sometimes for days before reaching their destinations, they are not sustained by the supplies initially given to them. Before long, they will need replenishment. Chapters of Grannies Respond in cities throughout the U.S. provide help and a friendly face, assurance, and guidance along the way.

Here's what you can do:

- **Purchase and send** needed supplies from Grannies Respond Amazon Wish List: [https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2T4PVNKHQIRK?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2T4PVNKHQIRK?ref_=wl_share)
- **Donate online:** <https://www.granniesrespond.org/supportus> and indicate your donation is go to **Philadelphia**.
- **Donate by check**, payable to Grannies Respond/Abuelas Responden, Inc. On the memo line print: **Philadelphia**. Mail to Grannies Respond/Abuelas Responden, Inc., PO Box 1106, Beacon, NY 12508.
- **Volunteer** to greet refugees passing through Philly. Granny Greeters are all ages, all genders; no need to be a Granny to offer a helping hand. Spanish language is not a requirement; Spanish speakers are available to help. You can also assist in making kits, fundraising, or other functions. To volunteer, please contact Kate Vandegrift, [vkate113@gmail.com](mailto:vkate113@gmail.com)



Margo Villanova, not actually a granny, is a Granny Greeter at the Greyhound Bus Station, with Philly Grannies Respond, meeting a bus to assist asylees.

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