On August 18, 2018, AIS reached a milestone: 10 years of service to immigrants in the New Haven community!

In that time, AIS has provided legal services to approximately 2,000 immigrants and family members, and community education events to hundreds more. AIS programs have assisted adults in gaining confidence in written and spoken English, prepared individuals to succeed at their citizenship interview, and helped children gain mastery of basic skills and develop good study habits.

Looking back to the past and hopeful for the future, we are filled with gratitude for you, our partners in mission.

**Grateful for the past...**

AIS opened for business on August 18, 2008. “We put our sign on the door, and waited for the phone to ring,” Sr. Mary Ellen Burns recalls with a smile. At that time, AIS was given space by Centro San Jose, a Catholic Charities office, whose staff generously shared their knowledge of the Fair Haven community.

In September 2009 the office moved to 81 Saltonstall Avenue, where it has stood since then, providing clients with low-cost, high-quality assistance towards achieving their goals and building their future.

AIS attained agency recognition from the Board of Immigration Appeals in 2012, allowing non-attorney staff members to represent clients before the US Citizenship and Immigration Services. All staff participate regularly in training to insure knowledge of ever-changing legal standards and procedures.

June 2012 saw the beginning of the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program. AIS provided community education and support to non-profit partners while delivering individual representation to hundreds of immigrant youth, a service that continues to the present.

Over time, AIS has expanded the scope of its services, working with clients to reunite their families, gain legal residence and citizenship, and to access benefits available for victims of domestic violence and violent crimes. AIS also assists citizens of countries in crisis and youth who have suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment.

**Hopeful for the future...**

Thanks to your generous partnership, AIS looks ahead with confidence to the next decade of life-changing assistance for immigrants! The dedication of AIS volunteers and donors to collaboration with immigrant families grounds our hope that, despite the challenges of the current moment, there are endless possibilities for growth into a better future.

This hope, which has animated generations of immigrants who have begun new lives in our city, state and country, lives in our clients today!
Young women in formation with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have served at AIS since its inception, as HAP tutors, translators and office support staff. This year, Sr. Cathy Phillips, a second year novice, is AIS receptionist and coordinator of the Vote 2020 Naturalization project. She also coordinates the volunteer-staffed Homework Assistance Program (see story at left), for which she volunteered from 2016-2018. Reflecting on her experience in the AIS legal services program, Sr. Cathy states, “I have learned so much already from my time at AIS, both about the immigration system and about the courage of the human spirit. I am blessed to be here.”

Volunteers have been crucial to the success of AIS since the beginning, when Misty Maza came in fall 2008, asking how she could help. She was the first of many dedicated individuals to serve through the years. From client representation to office support, volunteers multiply the capacity of AIS to serve our client communities. Working at AIS has influenced the paths of many. Former volunteer Cristina Ceballos states, “AIS showed me how a small organization can help its community, and helped convince me to study law!” Another volunteer, Lizzie Shan, says that “AIS has a special place in my heart. You set an example of passionate advocacy for some of the most vulnerable people.” Volunteers past and present, we appreciate you!

“HAP provides a consistent, educational, and faith-filled environment for the students where they are able to grow,” says Victor Vessicchio, Principal of St. Francis-St. Rose School. HAP began as a partnership between AIS and the local Catholic school in 2008 as another way to make a difference for immigrant families. Every Monday and Thursday afternoon, you will find a group of over 30 students working on their homework with the help of dedicated volunteers. “I gain so much from my time with the children. I love doing this,” shares Louise Ortoleva, a volunteer in her 10th year with the program. She is pictured above with the 2nd grade students.

Asylum law was enacted in response to international failure to provide refuge to victims of Nazi persecution, which led to the deaths of 10 million people, including 6 million Jews, in the World War II era.

The US Immigration and Nationality Act establishes the right of individuals who have been persecuted in their countries of origin, or who fear persecution should they return, to apply for asylum, whether from within the US, at a port of entry, or between ports of entry.

Barring a change in circumstances, adults must apply for asylum within a year of entering the US.

To gain asylum, applicants must meet rigorous standards of proof to establish a fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.
From the Director’s Desk…

Dear Friends of AIS,

As we reflect on the first ten years of AIS’s work, the word “together” keeps repeating in my mind. One of our greatest joys is seeing client families together again after long separation. Our greatest strength lies in working together: with our clients, whose efforts are the key to everything we achieve; with other agencies, universities and faith communities in greater New Haven; with the volunteers whose generosity and dedication never flags; with the many Apostles of the Sacred Heart who have participated in our ministry since 2008; and with you, our supporters, who have great hearts for justice, for compassion and for welcoming the stranger, the heart of our mission.

As former staff member, Sr. Doretta D’Albero, at right with client, said, “It was a singular privilege to accompany immigrants on their journey to dignity and peace.” It is a privilege we all share! In this holy season, may Christ the migrant child, Christ the refugee, bless you and all those you love with true peace.

In His Heart, Sister Mary Ellen

We wish you a Blessed New Year! May 2019 bring you health, peace, and joy!
TOGETHER WE DO GREAT THINGS ~ THANK YOU!

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