



REV. FRED RABIDOUX

Project Name and Location: The Guardian Group: Refugee Resettlement and Support with the First UU Society of San Francisco, CA

My plan will strengthen justice building by bringing increasing numbers of UUSF congregants into direct support for the LGBTI refugees. Through the Guardian Group program the UUSF members, as well as members at the congregations at which we advocate, are becoming more and more directly involved in the expanding consciousness regarding Human Rights.

Project Goal:

In 18 months, the SF Church will increase the congregation's awareness and capacity around asylum seekers, and in particular LGBT persons. Four new families will be placed by the Guardian group and the group itself will add an additional 11 members to meet this goal. We will also begin a visitation program to the detention center in Oakland and expect 20% of the congregation to participate in some way.

Personal Reflection:

Since the beginning of the year, the Guardian Group has matured as an organization. Beyond our fundamental work with individual asylum seekers and refugees, we have grown financially and established a fundraising program for the remainder of the year and beyond. We have completed a Policies and Procedures manual and implemented a training program for new mentors. We have preached our message in six UU churches. We have seen the transition of four individuals this year who have been granted asylum and are well into establishing their own lives, with one additional person awaiting the final disposition of his asylum application. Most recently, we have begun working with two new asylum seekers and are training two new mentors.

Project Update:

Being part of the JBI program has created an organizational format to use with the Guardian Group, as we grow into a new phase of development beyond its initial formation four years ago. It has provided a new mechanism for envisioning the scope and range of the group's future activities. As we work our way further into the world of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees, the opportunities for increasing congregational participation keep widening. We are now reaching deeper into the congregation for support at multiple levels beyond financial support alone. At our church we have planned a Social Justice focus month for January 2017, during which the work of the Guardian Group will be highlighted.

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There is uniqueness to the make up of the JBI program; its participants bring a whole additional dimension to the work we are doing. Our local social justice program is now part of a much larger entity with ties to all the individuals and projects JBI supports throughout the country. This promotes a significant shift in our social Justice consciousness that affects both local and distant congregations. The “spiritual connecting matter” that JBI provides is a new creation, a living model that will grow and create bonds and connections that continually expand--like a spider growing its web and expanding the reach of its boundaries.