ARISE RIO GRANDE BORDER WITNESS PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION

*Striving to be a bridge that connects the reality of the people of the Rio Grande Valley with those who wish to understand it*

ARISE

Founded in 1987, ARISE (A Resource In Serving Equality) is an organization of women engaged in leadership development and community-building in three Rio Grande neighborhoods in Hidalgo County, South Texas. Built by women who reside in the neighborhoods, the grassroots network of community centers combine direct responses to each group’s request with activity in larger movements to improve lives of immigrants both on the local, regional and national levels.

Rio Grande Border

ARISE is located in three neighborhoods (Colonias) that border the Rio Grande – the river that serves as the boundary between the United States and Mexico. It is also the river which has created the rich earth that has encouraged the agriculture of corn, fruits, vegetables, sugar cane and sorghum. Its success has been based on a large number of farm workers drawn from both sides of the border. Due to floods and draught, more immigrants find work now in factories which package goods made in Mexico. Hidalgo County is rich in history and economy but is also home to some of the poorest communities in Texas.

Border Witness Program

ARISE assumed leadership of the Border Witness Program in 1994, as its understanding grew of the structural implications of the lives of the people it serves, giving it the potential to be an advocate for its improvement.

Initially The Border Witness Program was created to inform U.S. citizens of the plight of Central American refugees crossing into the United States, a migration which has recently included a large number of children unaccompanied by their parents. Participants became witnesses to the refugees’ demand for human rights, and their testimonies as victims of war, oppression and upheaval.

Today the Border Witness Program also calls people to understand the unique struggles of this population which lives along the Texas/Mexican border - a region formed by people who came to seek a better life for themselves and their children, and whose hope continues despite poverty, economic change and social conflict.

The Border Witness Program invites groups of people of all ages (delegations) to join in an experience of listening, observing, learning and sharing with the people of the Rio Grande Border towns. Important social, economic, religious, cultural, and political issues are presented in a direct way through personal visits, discussion, and reflection - thus giving a voice to families, workers, and community organizations.

The Border Witness Program facilitates the understanding of the struggles and strengths of the border communities, analyzes the systems that perpetuate poverty and marginalization, and promotes direct participation in the issues that affect the Rio Grande area.
Delegations

Ordinarily delegations consist of from 5 to 15 persons with an acceptable minimum of 3 individuals. The length of the delegation’s experience may be adjusted to the needs of the group, but ordinarily consists of a 3 to 5 day program.

Housing, meals and transportation are the responsibility of each delegation. The Program can provide information about obtaining these necessities at a low cost. (Delegations of three or less may make alternative plans for transportation with the Border Witness Coordinator)

Cost of the Delegation’s experience includes: a $35 non-refundable registration fee, usually to be paid 6 weeks before the visit; and a daily cost of $35/person/day. (Students and persons on a fixed limited income pay $25/person/day). The total daily cost per person is due on the first day of the visit.

Application for a Border Witness Experience

An initial application form can be obtained by contacting Ramona Casas, the program coordinator by: phone (956-783-6959); or e-mail (ariseadvocacy1@gmail.com); letter (1417 South Tower Rd., Alamo, TX 78516); A reply will be sent within 2 weeks of receiving an application request. When visit dates have been firmed up a more informational application will be sent to the Delegation contact person.

Delegations are encouraged to seek sponsorship from their communities, schools, and churches in order to reduce the cost of the visit and allow more people to participate in the experience.

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Borders can be viewed as solid walls that limit, confine and separate people from each other, or borders can be seen as meeting places that offer a unique opportunity for encounter, dialogue and sharing, a place of interface between peoples, ideas and experiences

(Excerpted from “Called to the Border: A Paradigm for Mission” by Patricia Lloyd- Sidle)
ARISE RIO GRANDE BORDER WITNESS PROGRAM
DESCRIPTION OF VISIT DETAILS

Registration Fee: $35 per person is paid 6 weeks before the Visit.

Program Fee: $35 per person per day.
   $25 per person for day for students or persons on a fixed income
   (The full cost of the daily experiences for each participant is paid on the first day of the visit)

Cancelation Policy: The registration fee is non-refundable.

Housing and Transportation: Each Delegation is responsible for make its own arrangements for travel to the ARISE Support Center, Alamo, TX as well as travel and accommodations during the Border Witness Experience. The ARGBWP Program can provide information about low cost housing and restaurant options and a list of local vehicle rental agencies. For Delegations of three or less, other arrangements may be made by contacting the Program Coordinator.

Meals: Delegations are responsible for preparing or purchasing their own meals. A normal day on the Border Witness Program includes time for lunch. Delegations are welcome to prepare bag lunches or make arrangements to purchase lunches. The Border Witness Program may plan for certain meals to be provided by and shared with the groups that the Delegation is visiting. For these meals $5.00/person is requested as a donation to the receiving organization.

Special Needs: These should be indicated on the Final Delegation Application, and Individual Participant Application, so that the ARGBWP staff can adequately prepare for the visit. Examples include dietary needs, hearing/visual needs, wheelchair accessibility needs.

Preparation for the Delegation Visit:

- The ARGBWP encourages groups to find sponsors or their trips to the Texas-Mexico Border. Fundraisers are excellent means to help defray the costs of the Delegation, as well as to raise community awareness as to the purpose of the trip;
- Hats, sun glasses, sun screen and casual comfortable clothing and shoes, will make the experience a comfortable one;
- Passports are not necessary as the ARGBWP does not include a trip the Mexican border town;
- Participants are encouraged to leave prejudices behind in order to remain open to the people they meet and programs they learn about, and are expected to be cordial when making site visits.
Components of Visit Experience:

The Delegation will experience **site visits** which can include: participation in the activities of one or more ARISE Community Centers; Refugee Center; Border Patrol Office; Homes of Immigrants; and view of the Border and the Border Wall.

The Delegation will participate in **interactive presentations** which may include: the Rio Grande Valley; population of the Border towns - their religion and culture and reason for immigration; Mexican reality and factories (maquiladoras) on Mexican border; obstacles to immigration; and the contribution of immigrants to economy and culture of the United States.

Daily Schedule:

Each day will begin at 9 A.M. with a morning reflection followed by a site visit or presentation, lunch and a rest period will take place between 12 Noon and 1:30 followed by a second site visit or presentation. The day will end with discussion, reflection, and prayerful meditation.

Delegation Follow-up:

The ARGBWP encourages Delegation participants to share what they have learned with others, so the understanding and actions necessary to improve the life of immigrants can be understood by the larger community. Examples include speaking engagements, slide shows, newspaper articles etc. Further suggestions for follow-up will be made at the time of the visit.
FINAL DELEGATION APPLICATION

AGREEMENT

The ARGBWP commits to provide the Border Witness Experience on the following dates ________________

To _____________________________________________________________

(Name of Delegation)

Through ___________________________________________________________

(Name of Contact Person)

At _____________________________________________________________

(Address) (Phone #) (FAX) (E-Mail)

______________________________________________________________

(Signature of ARGBWP Coordinator) (Date Signed)

The Delegation Contact person attests to the fact that all Delegation Participants:

• Understand that ARGBWP is not responsible for accidents or injuries incurred by the Delegation Participants during their visit;
• Have read and agreed to comply with the information contained in the attached Description of Visit Details;
• Will submit their individual applications and a $35 deposit/person 6 weeks before the Visit;
• Will pay the full cost of their daily experiences on the first day of the Visit.

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

(Delegation Contact Person) (Name of Delegation)

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

(Signature of Delegation Contact Person) (Date Signed)
Accommodations

The Delegation will be staying at:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Name of Accommodation                          Address                          Phone #

Travel Information

Will the group be traveling together? Yes ___ No ___ If No, please explain:

Arrival is planned by: Airplane; ___ Car/Van; ___ Bus; ___ Other; ________________________________

Arrival Date and Location: _____________________________________________________________

Departure Date and Location: ___________________________________________________________

Transportation

Do all Drivers have valid Driver’s Licenses? ________________________________________________

What type of vehicle(s) will you be using? ________________________________________________

How many people can fit in each vehicle? ________________________________________________

(Note: Plan on including 2 Arise personnel in the Delegation’s vehicles)

Are the vehicle(s) covered by Auto Insurance for use by the delegation? ___________________________
Participants of _________________________________ Delegation on Dates ________________________________

(Note: An application form for each participant must be completed and sent in with the required deposit at least 6 weeks prior to date of delegation)

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<th>Name of Participant</th>
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<th>Special Need</th>
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ARISE RIO GRANDE BORDER WITNESS PROGRAM
ARGBWP
1417 South Tower Rd., Alamo, TX 78516
(956)783-8959; ariseadvocacy1@gmail.com

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT APPLICATION

Name of Delegation: _______________________________ Dates of Delegation: __________

Name of Participant: _______________________________ Male: ____ Female: ____

Address: ____________________________________________________________________________

Home Phone: ______________ Work Phone: ______________ E-Mail: ___________________________

Date of Birth: ______________ Nationality: ___________________ Occupation: ___________________

Social Security #: ___________________________ Type of Photo I.D. ____________________________

Emergency Contact Name: __________________________ Relationship: _______________________

Home Phone: ______________ Work Phone: ______________ E-Mail: ___________________________

Health Information:

Personal Health: Excellent:_________ Good:_________ Fair:_________ Poor:_______________

Are there any special health needs or physical challenges that we should be aware of? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain _________________________________________________________________

Do you have any allergies? Yes______; No______; If yes, please describe them below:

_________________________________________________________________________________________

Do you have any special dietary needs? Yes______; No______; If yes, please describe them below:

_______________________________________________________________________________________

What is the name of your family physician: ___________________________ : Phone: _____________
**ARISE RIO GRANDE BORDER WITNESS PROGRAM**  
**INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT APPLICATION**

**Travel Information**

I plan to arrive by: Plane: _______ Private Car/Van: _______ Rented Car/Van: _______ Bus: _______


Arrival Date and Location


Departure Date and Location

If you will be one of the drivers during the visit:


Driver’s License # State in which License issued Expiration Date

**Please answer the following questions in order that we may understand your reason and aspirations for the visit, and so be able to serve you better. If you need additional space, feel free to attach an extra page.**

1. How did you hear about the ARISE Rio Grande Border Witness Program?

2. What knowledge or experience have you had in the areas of immigration, economic policy, and/or community development?  
   (Include work or travel experience, courses taken, travel and related groups to which you belong)

3. Why do you wish to participate in the ARISE Rio Grande Border Witness Program?

4. Do you speak Spanish? If so what is the level of your fluency?

5. How do you hope to share your experience with people from your home community when you return?

6. Is there any additional information you wish us to know in order to make your visit as meaningful as possible?

7. If you are planning to receive college credits or CEU’s credit for this experience, please explain and indicate the details of the type of certification that is needed.

8. Please share with us the names of your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representative, as well as their phone numbers:
We at the ARISE Rio Grande Border Witness Program look forward to meeting you, we thank you for your interest in Immigration issues and the Border populations, hope that our program will fulfill your expectations. Hasta Mas Pronto!!