

# Blessings

Newsletter of Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio – an agency of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati



## DREAMers Face Uncertain Future

Isabel was 11 months old when her mother left Mexico to begin a new life in the United States.

"I've never known any other home," Isabel said. "I was 14 years old when I applied for DACA. It meant everything for me."

With DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Isabel could legally stay in the United States. She learned to speak English and followed the law. She got her license at 16, graduated from school and worked as a dispatcher at UPS.

When she went to renew her DACA last year, a routine process for her, she received a rejection letter.

"I cried. I felt helpless. I knew I'd lose my job because my DACA had expired. All I can do is wait," Isabel said.

Her husband, Mark, shares her frustration. He said, "As a white male in America, I hear people talk about immigration and listen to their views. I know she did nothing wrong. It's irritating. It's all out of our hands."

They turned to Sister Mary Wendeln, a volunteer with Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, for assistance. Sister Mary explained several DACA clients received rejection letters due to delays in processing even though they had been postmarked ahead of the deadline. She made the necessary calls and appeals and now Isabel's DACA renewal is under review.

Genesis, 25, listens intently as Isabel recounts her experience. Genesis left



Sister Mary reviews the status of DACA renewals with Genesis and Isabel.

Mexico when she was 14 to reunite with family living in Cincinnati.

"When I arrived, I felt at home immediately," Genesis said. "Now, I have a six-year-old son who is an American citizen. When I received my DACA rejection letter, I felt so bad. I just looked at my son and cried. I can't imagine leaving him."

Sister Mary was also able to assist Genesis in getting her DACA renewal reviewed. About 4,000 DACA applicants had been held up nationally including five Catholic Charities' clients locally.

Both Isabel and Genesis are waiting and praying that their DACA applications will be renewed. Renewal provides another two years of continuing the lives they've built in the United States. Neither wants

to think what will happen after the next two years.

Will DACA remain an option? Will Congress create a path to citizenship for DREAMers?

"It's like a door being held open and shutting as you come forward," Genesis said.

► **To support DREAMers, write your representative in Congress and urge them to support a path to citizenship before DACA expires in March. More than 15,000 letters have been sent to Congress from Ohio so far. That's almost two letters for every Ohio DACA applicant on file.**

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