

Centreville United Methodist Helping Local Immigrants

By [Bonnie Hobbs, Centre View](#)

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Local immigrants hard-pressed for cash now have a place to turn for help. Centreville United Methodist Church has joined Grace Ministries and, as such, is providing them with emergency food, clothing and diapers — as well as healthcare and spiritual guidance.

The ministry began in September and operates the second Saturday of each month. The church doors open at 7 a.m., with refreshments, hospitality and a brief worship service in Spanish and English. Registration and distribution of food and clothes are from 8-10:30 a.m.

"The first month [Sept. 13], 54 families came in," said Barb Shaiko, CUMC's director of missions. "The next month [Oct. 11], we had nearly 150 families and we actually ran out of food and clothing. We're buying the food, but we need diaper and clothing donations."

For the Dec. 13 session, donations will be accepted in the church's fellowship hall from Dec. 7 through Dec. 12. Clothing should be bagged and labeled by size; small and medium men's clothes are needed most. Clothing for women, children and babies should be in season and in good condition. Children's books, plastic grocery bags and toys are also needed.

In addition, Grace Ministries provides information and training to the Hispanic immigrant community. In September, Edgar Aranda, an advocator with the Legal Aid Justice Center in Falls Church, spoke to attendees about immigration issues affecting them. In October, a representative from Just Neighbors — a nonprofit, immigrant legal-services organization — did likewise.

Shaiko said job information, such as Fairfax County Public Schools' bus- and truck-driver training, will be passed on to those interested. Besides that, she said, "We'll also have personal-care-assistant training."

VOLUNTEERS to help on ministry Saturdays are also needed. Shaiko says it takes 100 people, between Friday and Saturday, to set up for and work at the ministry. "Anyone in the community may help; they don't need to be a member of the church," she said. "And Spanish-speaking



Photo by Bonnie Hobbs/Centre View
Barb Shaiko



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volunteers would be great."

Centreville United Methodist Church is at 6400 Old Centreville Road in Centreville. For more information, to volunteer or to donate items, e-mail graceministries@centreville-umc.org or call 703-830-2684.



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