



## **Meet Kadhim: Inside the Work of IWR's Housing and Food Security Coordinator**



Towards the end of 2025, we welcomed Kadhim Owayez, IWR's new Housing and Food Security Coordinator, into our small staff team. Kadhim works closely with volunteers and community partners to deliver IWR's Welcome Home program. Read our latest [blog post](#) to learn about Kadhim, some of the challenges faced by refugees and immigrants that he encounters, and his work organizing vital support to people in the early stages of resettling in our community.

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## Tax Clinic



A total of 21 households attended a tax clinic made available to IWR families each Saturday in February by Kari Smoker, Associate Professor of Accounting at Ithaca College. For the third year in a row, Kari has partnered with us to help recently arrived refugees and immigrants navigate the tax system and file their returns correctly. This year, numerous volunteers shared their time and skills to make the clinic happen. Our deepest thanks go to Kari at the helm and the seven interpreters who covered five languages between them.

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## Current Needs

IWR has located an apartment for a mother and two children we are working with and is preparing to help them move in at the start of April. We are now collecting donations of furniture and household items for their home. Please check this [needs list](#) and fill in the form if you are able to help with any of the items. Many thanks!

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## Use Your Voice

A recently proposed federal rule would [indefinitely pause work permits](#) for asylum seekers. Now is the time to raise opposition to this unjust reform and stop it in its tracks. Please help people seeking asylum here in Tompkins County and nation-wide keep the right to earn a living!

You can submit a [public comment](#) to the federal register until **April 24<sup>th</sup>**. Please also share this request widely among family and friends.

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## **Campaign Success against Ithaca City's Contract with Flock Safety**

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the Ithaca Common Council [voted](#) not to extend the city's contract with Flock Safety, following public comments expressing concerns about the company's street surveillance cameras in Ithaca. One of the key issues raised was that law enforcement access to footage from the cameras puts immigrants at greater risk of tracking and detention by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. The vote sets a positive precedent for other jurisdictions to reverse the growth in use of these cameras. We encourage our readers to please continue to pressure Tompkins County to also end their contract with Flock Safety!

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## **IWR Outreach**

In the past month, IWR has brought information and discussion about issues affecting refugees to a range of local audiences. Programs Coordinator Leigh Bacher presented to a class at the Lehman Alternative Community School and a homeschool group in Lansing. Global Roots Play School Director Bronwyn Losey spoke at an event titled "Faithful Resistance for Immigration Justice," organized by the United Methodists of Upper New York. Executive Director Casey Verderosa was interviewed for an [article](#) published by the Ithaca Times on March 9th, reporting on the firm hold of sanctuary policies in Tompkins County following threats against sanctuary cities made in the presidential State of the Union address. Casey also spoke about IWR's work to the audience of Cornell's annual PAO Bhangra exhibition on March 7th. Thank you to all of these groups for inviting us to share our perspective!

If you are interested in having IWR staff give a talk in your school, community group or workplace, please reach out at: [ithacawelcomesrefugees@gmail.com](mailto:ithacawelcomesrefugees@gmail.com).

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## Local Events



**Busking for Justice:** Come along on April 3<sup>rd</sup> to see local band 14 Strings!, a Filipino style Rondalla live in action. The band will perform at Café Dewitt from 5.30-7pm as part of Busking for Justice, a series of fundraiser concerts on the first Friday of each month, supporting immigrants and their families facing the impacts of detention and deportation. Admission is free. Donations are encouraged and food is available for purchase.

**Supporting Immigrants in Our Community:** Mary-Jo Dudley, Director of Migrant Advocacy and Support, will host a public Zoom discussion on March 31 at 7pm on this subject. The event will cover: what motivates people to migrate, the roles immigrants play in our communities, how immigrants contribute to the economy, how to plan to prevent family separation, and how community members can help. Register [here](#).

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## Gratitude



We are feeling especially grateful this month to three local businesses that recently held fundraisers in aid of IWR. Thank you to [Angry Mom Records](#), [Café Dewitt](#) and the [Rhine House](#)! We were also honored to join the Sophie Fund and Cornell student groups for an award luncheon to conclude the 2025 [“Cupcake Button” fundraising campaign](#) in support of IWR programs (photo above). Finally, a shout out to [Ithaca High School Choirs](#), who chose to spotlight IWR in their annual theme concert last week as part of an effort to promote democratic efforts in the community.



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