Refugee crisis in Europe continues, ADRA opens refugee center in Belgrade, Adventist youth initiative receives government award in Vietnam, and more.

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Center used as an information center for refugees passing through Serbia.
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Last week, ADRA and its partners (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Municipality SavskiVenac, Belgrade Center for Human Rights and NGO Klikaktiv) opened the Asylum Information Center in Belgrade to assist refugees passing through Serbia by providing reliable information about their rights and available resources in their own languages. Information is being provided in Arabic, Urdu, Farsi, Pashtu, English, and French. Translators are also provided to assist with questions or concerns regarding legal asylum-seeking procedures, everyday life-issues, and medical or psychosocial support.

Read more at news.adventist.org.

Adventist youth initiative receives government award in Vietnam

One Year In Mission Vietnam recognized for 2 community service projects.

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Adventist Church in Europe responds to migrant crisis
Church leaders say, "the immigrant story is also our story."

Europe's refugee and migrant crisis has escalated over the summer, leaving the continent divided over how to deal with a flood of people led by Syrians fleeing war in their homeland.

The desperate migrants and asylum seekers now flooding into Europe by the tens of thousands, and the inability so far to accommodate
them in an organized way, may be starting to fray Europe’s commitment to erase old borders. German and Austrian officials are also increasing controls in their border region.

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Refugee crisis in Europe continues, ADRA opens refugee center in Belgrade

ADRA founded Asylum Info Center is frequented by refugees, who are able to use free Wi-Fi and computers.

Center used as an information center for refugees passing through Serbia.

September 08, 2015 | Belgrade, Serbia | Natalia López-Thismón

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Refugees who visit the center can use computers and Wi-Fi, free of charge, to find information or stay connected to loved ones.

“This kind of center is critical,” says Igor Mitrović, ADRA Serbia County Director. “A large number of refugees do not want to apply for asylum status in Serbia, putting them in a difficult situation. They are vulnerable and our objective is to empower them, because this may be essential to their safety, health and dignity.”

If they do not register, he says, they cannot claim rights and services and are deprived of medical assistance. Mitrović explained that many refugees are sleeping outdoors with lack of proper hygiene, and no food.

ADRA has already distributed 2,000 meal kits and water to refugees entering Zajecar in eastern Serbia. The agency has also distributed hygiene items, diapers, baby formula, shoes, sanitary towels, etc.

According to the United Nations, there are 1,000 refugees crossing daily into Serbia on their way to the European Union. Officials in Serbia are estimating that that by the end of 2015, there will be about 120,000 refugees in Serbia on any given day, mostly in transit.

The need for food, water, shelter, mobile toilets and showers increases as refugees travel through Serbia on their way to Hungary.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency International is the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its work empowers communities and changes lives around the globe by providing sustainable community
Refugee crisis in Europe continues, ADRA opens refugee center in Belg...

Adventist youth initiative receives government award in Vietnam

OYIM Vietnam coordinator Keiko Le (fourth from left) received a certificate of appreciation award on August 27 from ward (local government) leaders for OYIM Vietnam's two community service activities in ward 9 Phu Nhuan district, Ho Chi Minh City. Photo courtesy of Keiko Le.

One Year In Mission Vietnam recognized for 2 community service projects.

September 08, 2015 | Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam | Teresa Costello with additional reporting from Le Bao Ngan (Keiko Le)

An innovative Adventist youth program in the church’s Southeast Asia territory (SSD) has recently earned praise from local government leaders in Vietnam. One Year in Mission (OYIM) Vietnam volunteers received a certificate of governmental appreciation for two community projects in ward 9 Phu Nhuan district during an August 27 ceremony in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon.

Ward (sub-district) leaders cited the group's community activities during the recent summer months as positive contributions to the well-being and health of residents.

OYIM volunteers partnered with the ward to clean railway and outdoor market areas for one project. The second project was a health day complete with free haircuts and back massages which were very popular.

In addition to these two projects, the group has energetically partnered with other wards and organizations to meet community needs over the last year. Some of these activities included school supply distribution to disadvantaged children, a clean-up day, a dental health day and free motorcycle washes in this city of approximately 3.5 million motorcycles.

The volunteers also work with hospitals, charities, and other entities in Ho Chi Minh City and throughout Vietnam. For example, they partnered with a local Buddhist place of worship known as a pagoda for a school supply distribution project.

During a video report about this event, OYIM Vietnam coordinator Le Bao Ngan (Keiko Le) shared that the purpose of their activities is to “not only bring meaningful action and warmth to…children but to inspire young people to do good…daily.”

Another way these volunteers seek to empower and inspire youth is through creating positive social gatherings such as free guitar lessons. These night-time lessons enable youth to gain a new skill while enjoying an uplifting and fun environment.

Le comments that, “It’s just a small way but we hope that the [OYIM Vietnam] movement will help young people become more involved and inspired to impact society.”

Originally developed by the General Conference in 2013, the OYIM initiative was then introduced in each division.
The Southern Asia-Pacific Division now has OYIM country coordinators in 11 of its 14 countries with a wide-ranging network of volunteers.

Vietnam is a Communist country bordered by China, Laos and Cambodia. Reports indicate that approximately 8% of its more than 91 million people practice Christianity. Officially recognized by the government in 2008, the Seventh-day Adventist church has more than 11,000 members and 15 churches in the country.
Adventists help rename a square in Rome after Martin Luther

The street where the dedication ceremony will take place. [photo courtesy of Corrado Cozzi]

For more than 6 years the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Italy played an instrumental role in the official recognition.

September 02, 2015 | Rome, Italy | Corrado Cozzi/EUD News, ANN Staff

With the approaching 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Italy successfully led a petition for Rome, Italy to recognize Martin Luther, who sparked the Protestant Reformation.

On October 31, 1517, Luther, a German monk, affixed 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg, and in doing so, laid the foundation of the greatest schism that has ever shaken western Christianity.

On January 3, 1521, Luther received the papal bull of excommunication, issued by Pope Leo X. And now, nearly half a century after the revolutionary action, an official recognition will be granted to Luther by the city of Rome.

"In 2009, unbeknownst to each other, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Lutheran Church issued an application to the City of Rome, asking to name a square of the city 'Martin Luther,'" said Dora Bognandi, former director of public affairs and religious liberty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Italy, based in Rome.

Bognandi tenaciously fought for the recognition. "Thanks to the commitment of Dora Bognandi, a major Italian newspaper ‘La Repubblica’ recently attributed to the Adventists the whole initiative," said David Romano, current director of public affairs and religious liberty in Italy.

Early in the process, the office in charge of the urban road structure in Rome responded positively but failed to move the process forward.

"The State Council of all Churches in the Roman territory, in which Adventists are strong members and wise promoters, took the situation in hand," said Bognandi. "We met several times with the municipal councilors, with the office in charge. We wrote several letters, until at the end of the year 2014 when we were told that the request had been granted and had to be finally approved by the City Council."

Six years have passed since the first request "advanced to the Capitol by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, made in June 2009, to the dedicated Committee of Rome, in view of the 500th anniversary of the historic visit to Rome made by Luther," according to ‘La Repubblica’.

The official naming of the square in Colle Oppio Park, which is near the Coliseum, will take place on September 16, in order to allow to the Mayor of Rome, Ignazio Roberto Marino, to be present and to honor the event.

"I think it will be a place where evangelicals and Protestants will feel at home and will promote important activities," said Bognandi.

Representatives of various Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, and representatives of...
non-Christian religions are planning to attend the ceremony. "Because this is an important moment for all minorities," said Romano. "We will present ourselves, and I hope also many members of our Adventist church will be there with me."

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Adventist Church in Europe responds to migrant crisis

[photo courtesy of Inter-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists]

Church leaders say, "the immigrant story is also our story."

September 03, 2015 | Bern, Switzerland | Andreas Mazza

Europe's refugee and migrant crisis has escalated over the summer, leaving the continent divided over how to deal with a flood of people led by Syrians fleeing war in their homeland.

The desperate migrants and asylum seekers now flooding into Europe by the tens of thousands, and the inability so far to accommodate them in an organized way, may be starting to fray Europe's commitment to erase old borders. German and Austrian officials are also increasing controls in their border region.

The European migrant crisis is rising through the increasing number of migrant arrivals – a combination of economic migrants and refugees – to the European Union across the Mediterranean Sea and the Balkans from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

The term has been used since April 2015, when at least five boats carrying almost two thousand migrants to Europe sank in the Mediterranean Sea, with a combined death toll estimated at more than 1,200 people.

In 2014, EU member states received 132,405 requests from migrants. In total, 23,295 requests were accepted so these migrants will receive some form of protection from the EU (asylum, refugee status, subsidiary protection, protection because of humanitarian reasons), while 109,110 requests were rejected so these migrants will be required to leave the territory of the European Union.

The EUD Public Relations Departments stated:

“Like millions of Europeans, the immigrant story is also our story. The European people are a welcoming and generous people. Europeans are, of course, right to demand better border security and better prevention from human trafficking. On the other hand, we do recognize the difficulty of managing this huge humanitarian crisis and promise, therefore, to pray for the competent authorities.

We believe that these people are doing what any of us would do if we had an opportunity for a better life for our families and children. They take the risk of coming here; many of them are extraordinarily impoverished and are claiming back their dignity as human beings.”

Mario Brito, President of the Inter-European Adventist Church, declared:"We are all children of the same Father. This is the time to stick together and share God's abundant love for each of us. May the Lord bless all these suffering migrants, may the Lord give us a merciful heart"
In Matthew 25, 34-36, Jesus says: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

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