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## Iowa raid sparks local action

### Area Latino groups rally to help families

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Immigration activists in Milwaukee are rallying to lend aid and support to the families in Postville, Iowa, affected by the largest immigration raid at a single site in history.

Earlier this month, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested 389 people on administrative immigration charges during a raid on the Agriprocessors Inc. plant in Postville, one of the largest kosher meatpacking plants in the world. The majority of those apprehended are Guatemalans; others are Mexican.

"Based on the number of criminal arrests (a total of 306 were charged criminally), this is the largest criminal work site enforcement operation ever in the United States," said U.S. Attorney Matt M. Dummermuth of the Northern District of Iowa.

News reports have said the town, with a population of 2,273, has been rocked by the raid at one of its biggest employers.

"The raid has created a humanitarian crisis and chaos for families who fear deportation or imprisonment of loved ones," said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, executive director of Voces de la Frontera, an immigrant and workers' rights group in Milwaukee.

Voces plans to hold an interdenominational prayer vigil in support of the detained workers at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Ascension Lutheran Church, 1236 S. Layton Blvd., where 100 candles will be lighted to symbolize the call for comprehensive immigration reform within the first 100 days of a new presidency.

Sister Sue Effinger, a member of the religious order that has offered sanctuary to hundreds of children and families at St. Bridget's Parish in Postville after the raid, is scheduled to speak, along with Sandra Rybachek of Wisconsin's Guatemalan community.

The League of United Latin American Citizens nationally and in Wisconsin is also working to provide

support to the families, said Darryl Morin, president of the Wisconsin chapter. "More than 100 children whose parents were taken in the raid were at the church because they didn't know where their parents were," he said.

The local chapter has launched a family relief fund to raise money to buy food, blankets, medicine and legal services for those affected by the raid.

LULAC Iowa, the archdiocese of Dubuque and other relief organizations are also participating in the relief effort, he said.

Of the 389 people detained on immigration charges, 62 were released on humanitarian grounds and 21 are being held on administrative charges, according to ICE officials. Eighteen of those picked up were juveniles between the ages of 13 and 17 and were released to an adult or turned over the Health and Human Services' office of refugee resettlement, ICE said. Those not facing criminal charges will be placed in removal proceedings.

After plea agreements, 270 of those charged criminally were sentenced last week to five months in prison for working at a meatpacking plant with false documents.

The American Civil Liberties Union has condemned the denial of legal protections to those arrested during the raid.

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