

Lizzie and Lucio's story

Lucio and Lizzie are parents to three young sons, they are residents of Traverse City, and they are members of Central Church. Lizzie is a US citizen, born and raised here in Michigan. Lucio was born in Mexico and was brought to the US as a young child. Though Lucio doesn't have documented immigration status in the US, this is where he grew up and is the only home he knows. As a TC West High School graduate, he was educated in our community, his family lives here, Traverse City is where he is employed and where he is buying a house. Unfortunately, under the current US immigration laws, there isn't a pathway for Lucio or thousands of other adults who were brought into the country as children, to gain legal status in the US. As a result, in February Lucio was apprehended by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and detained in Detroit. At a hearing last month, a judge ruled that Lucio must leave the country and won't be able to come home to Traverse City.

Suddenly, the lives of Lucio, Lizzie, and their sons were turned upside down and new challenges and concerns have become a part of the family's daily reality. Financial challenges and logistical challenges are huge hurdles to overcome, but probably the most difficult are the emotional challenges and the trauma and grief that they are all living through right now and will impact them the rest of their lives. Thankfully, our community is rallying around them and hopefully the support will make a bad situation more manageable.

Lucio is a client of our TC JFON office. Because of his situation, there were no options for him to apply to change his status, but he did receive advise and counsel from our immigration attorney that he and Lizzie could trust. Now that Lucio will be leaving the country, JFON staff has reached out to Lizzie to provide compassionate support. Though no attorney can reverse the judge's decision, Lizzie's questions can be answered, and she can be given advise about steps she can take to hopefully reunite her family one day in the future.

This is what Justice For Our Neighbors is all about—providing free, high quality, compassionate legal services to immigrants and their families. At JFON, we take every step we can to keep families together. When that isn't possible under current US immigration laws, the family is supported with dignity and compassion. With Mother's Day and celebrations of family this week, think about families in our community and around the country that want to stay together, or be reunited if they have been separated. JFON TC is working to grow our capacity so we can support more people in need in northern Michigan. A full-time attorney employed by our clinic would allow more clients to be served and more complex immigration cases to be taken on here in Traverse City. \$10,000 is our goal to raise in May, which will allow us to reach our budget for 2018 and have a full-time attorney on board this summer. A consultant through Rotary Charities and a new state-wide Justice For Our Neighbors organization is helping our clinic to plan for financial sustainability to help us continue to offer services into the future. Please consider making a financial gift to support the work we do at JFON TC. Donation envelopes can be found in the church office and will be available this Sunday at church. You can also donate online by following this link jfonmi.org/donate/. The community of Central Church has been so supportive and generous to our JFON clinic and we are very grateful. Please help us take this next step in going from a clinic with limited staffing, to a more comprehensive, full time clinic.