

# PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A MISSION OF SECOND CHANCES

**T**his past winter we produced a new video that highlights the three parts of our name:

**Seafarers:** focusing on the over 27,000 seafarers we serve every year at our guesthouse and at the ports;

**International:** centering on the 28 asylees from all over the world that we have helped this past year transition from non-freedom to full integration into our county; and

**House:** showing how our guesthouse in Manhattan is both a mission finan-

cial generator and a mission command center. Our new video shows the faces and tells the stories of several seafarers and asylees who boldly and poignantly tell how Seafarers International House (SIH) has helped their lives. A home away from home. A place of assistance to those who are temporarily displaced. A family where the distressed are welcomed.

One of my favorite parts of the new video is when one of our asylees, Christine, says that staying at SIH was a "second chance in her life."



Asylee Christine is one of the many guests featured in the new 5-minute video that you may view on our web site [www.sihnyc.org](http://www.sihnyc.org). It was filmed by Noah Leon.

*"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning"*

*(Lamentations 3:21-23)*

Her smile, while she says these words, shows what only a picture or a video can communicate: deep gratitude for the ministry of SIH to people who are seeking safety and welcome in this country. God's mercies are new every morning. SIH is grateful to be able to extend God's second chance mercies to asylees each day.

And now for the rest of the story: Christine has just completed the coursework (highest score in her class) that will make her eligible for certification as a paralegal so that she can assist other asylees with their legal cases. As someone who received a second chance she now wants to help others have a second chance as well. ⚓



*Marsh Luther Dreyer*

# An Attempt to Portray “Wisdom,” - an asylee from Nigeria

By SIH Social Work Intern James Vild

“*Is it a dream? How is it I even wake up and I can be myself? I can tell people I'm gay — I'm not afraid all the time.*”

Then he wonders if it was his other life that was the dream. The home of which Wisdom speaks in alternating terms: of terror, yes — and of joy.

Indeed, the two seem impossibly entwined. Back in Nigeria, Wisdom devoted all his time, energy, and any small measure of safety he might have otherwise had, to running a community center and clinic for his LGBT family. He also created safe havens, secret locations for those in hiding: one of which would later save his life.

The strategy and determination that goes into organizing under constant threat of brutality, imprisonment and death, with scant resources for a people who are terrified and traumatized, I cannot comprehend. Nor can I begin to represent the little I have come to know within the space of this brief portrait, but: I could sit at his feet for hours.

Of course, being accessible to his community for this work also meant being very out as a gay man, which put him in grave danger. Of the last of countless beatings, he tells me, “I saw death.” Having narrowly escaped with his life, he went into hiding and found his way to us here, to the United States and to Seafarers International House (SIH) in Manhattan.

“This place [the SIH guesthouse], really opened my eyes - not just getting settled, accessing material, legal, social and emotional resources, but that I was ok.” His understated style, common to so many of our sojourners, belies the harrowing reality of the trials they face, both in the homes they have fled, and in the insecurity of their lives here in the U.S., where the very notion of asylum is increasingly under attack.

I'm not sure how to relay the fear he describes, the horrors he's seen and, sadly, experienced, without possibly painting a one-dimensional portrait that risks betraying his rightly judicious confidence or turning traumatic details into a sensationalized sound-bite for the sake of a convincing argument. Or creating shock value that risks overshadowing the love he still feels for his home, for the family he made there, how much he didn't want to leave them.

Imagine he is sitting in front of you. He is young and lively, yet his presence is generous with a subtlety that changes the room. As he talks, his face brightens sometimes as quickly as it falls. Describing reality for himself and his LGBT family back home, he says, “Every day of your life, you wake with fear, you go to bed with fear — you don't feel safe in your home and you're not.” Almost in the same breath, he continues, “The joy of coming together as just us — you see yourself so liberated and so excited that you are contributing



*Wisdom is one of the many asylees, who repay the kindness they received by assisting others.*

to all of this. There's nothing that kills faster than not being yourself.”

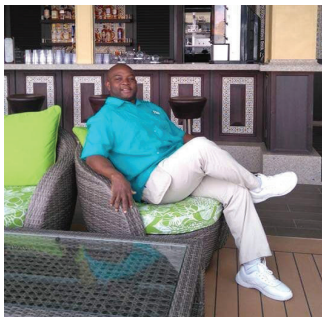
I have long been in awe of all the ways Wisdom risked his life for the people that he loved. Only now am I beginning to understand that the same work which put his life at risk, may have also saved it.

We should all be so lucky to share in such safe haven— it's not a shelter we provide for others, it's a shelter they share with us. We should not only open our doors. We should sit at their feet. 🚢

**In 2018, SIH provided 28 asylees with 1,182 nights of lodging and social assistance free of charge.**

**Help us assist this year's asylees by making a donation at [www.sihnyc.org](http://www.sihnyc.org) or join us for the Right of Asylum Reception on October 15**





Arlender.



Edinson (third from left).



Marsh Drege with the 2018 awardees Congress Member Adriano Espaillat and New Sanctuary Coalition's Ravi Ragbir. Photo by Henryk Behnke.

Most photos on this page provided by partner organizations.

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2019, 6 – 8PM

# 7TH ANNUAL RIGHT OF ASYLUM RECEPTION

Viewing the Statue of Liberty from Battery Gardens Restaurant, we will award these six *Outstanding Friends of Immigrants* from partner organizations:

**Arlender Santiago Nunez Lino**, *New Sanctuary Coalition (NSC)*

Arlender has been a friend of NSC for over a year. Through his personal connection to the community in Honduras he has encouraged, empowered and lifted the spirits of everyone around him. Since he has been granted asylum, he has been an active member with the anti-detention team. Arlender has led the orientation for new non-citizens at NSC's Pro Se Immigration Clinic and continues to serve as a leader for the Garifuna community in NYC.

**Edinson Calderon**, *Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP)*

Edinson reached out to QDEP when he was detained in Otay Mesa Detention Center, CA. He was seeking asylum from Venezuela. QDEP assisted him with a letter of support for his court hearing, commissary stipend and emotional support during his immigration process. Once Edinson won asylum, he relocated to NYC. Since then he became an incredible advocate for other LGBT migrants in detention centers and is the most active and engaged QDEP's volunteer and member that the organization has ever had.



**Franklin Lee**, Paralegal/Immigration Know Your Rights (KYR) Trainer, *Lutheran Social Services of New York*

Franklin has been an integral member of the immigration team and has been responsible for implementing the KYR presentations for immigrants including sessions with asylees at *Seafarers International House*. As the ICE point of contact in NYC, he aided the reunification of families and conducted case management. Franklin's experiences as the son of immigrants who came to the US from South Korea has greatly shaped his passion and interest in helping make the lives of immigrants better.



**John Wilkinson**, Legal Services Manager, *Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture (PSOT)*

For 19 years John has been with PSOT, tirelessly representing clients in their applications for asylum, family reunification, and citizenship and referring them to pro bono legal services. John worked as a development specialist for international agencies and the Peace Corps in Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other countries in West Africa. He speaks French and Wolof.



**Robert "Bob" Cohen**, *St. John's Lutheran Church, Poughkeepsie, NY*

Bob, a former IBMer and 40 year congregation member, has been instrumental in bringing awareness to and raising funds for St. John's asylee program, which provides assistance to asylees staying at Seafarers International House. He organizes Lunch & Learn programs along with Welcome Packages for asylees. Bob has always been a strong advocate for the disenfranchised and the needy in our midst.



**Rosa Santana**, Program Director, *First Friends of NJ & NY*

Rosa is a native of Honduras and became involved in immigrants' rights in 2010 after witnessing the injustice of detention and the impact that separation had on her own family. She first joined First Friends as a volunteer, visiting immigrants in detention. Her devotion and commitment led First Friends to hire her in 2012. Rosa also serves as the Detainee Advocate at the Hudson County Jail, where she investigates detainee grievances and complaints.

**To get your tickets (\$60 pp) visit [www.sihnyc.org/upcoming-events](http://www.sihnyc.org/upcoming-events).**

# THERE IS ALWAYS DANGER

By Ruth Setaro, SIH Port Chaplain in New Haven, CT

Eleven men climbed into the van to go shopping. The crew in the back were laughing, joking and singing along with the music playing on the radio. The captain sat in the front seat very somber and quiet. My attempts to engage him in any kind of conversation fell on deaf ears. We soon arrived at Exit 9 and I drove around and explained all the shopping opportunities and then left everyone off at Best Buy. I gave them my phone number "just in case" and it was determined that I would pick everyone up at 2000 hours at Target.

At the appointed hour, eleven men stood in front of Target loaded with bags and boxes. After squeezing everything in we started back to the ship. As we got back on the highway someone in the back asked if we could stop at a gas station so they could buy cigarettes. The captain, still

quiet, explained that their rationing of cigarettes was gone.

As we pulled into a mini market, ten men jumped out and headed into the store. I commented to the captain that his crew looked so young, most of them looking to be maybe in their early twenties.

Then the flood gates opened and for 20 minutes the captain seemed to open his heart.

He told me how tired he was, that after sailing through the trials of rough seas that even in port there was no time to rest. There were forms and paper work to file, things to repair and hours of inspections to navigate. He was TIRED. He learned that a car carrier ship that he had sailed on had either encountered a rogue wave or sudden wind that had turned it on its side. Luckily a Japanese naval ship

was in the area and was able to rescue the crew. There had been no time to put down lifeboats and the crew was floundering in the sea. The naval ship threw down nets for the men to grab and thankfully all were saved.

"There is always danger," he told me and "life as a seafarer is very hard. No one can really understand the sacrifices that have to be made for this life. Several months ago, one of my crew jumped overboard. Suicide is a real problem. Depression is a big problem, but what are you to do? This is the lot of the seafarer."

The conversation quickly ended as the men climbed back into the van. Back at the ship the captain reached over and took my hand and with a quiet smile said "thank you." 🚢



*This crew also takes a break from the dangers of the high seas with Port Chaplain Sigrid Erickson's dog Leif in the Port of New York and New Jersey.*



# CHRISTMAS-AT-SEA: A HOLIDAY INITIATIVE

Christmas-At-Sea is always in season as this youth group that stayed at Seafarers International House in Manhattan demonstrated in June. From the prairies of North Dakota to the open seas ... The most landlocked state in the U.S. understands the need to keep our seafarers warm this coming winter.

Why not start your own Christmas-At-Sea project group with your school, business or congregation?

If it is more convenient, you may make a donation and have us purchase the items for you. Typically, a completely filled satchel costs about \$25.



At the SIH Guesthouse near Union Square, the youth group from Sunne Lutheran Church in Wilton, ND sorted hand-knitted hats and scarves from Christ Lutheran Church, Minot, ND. Photo by Marsh Drege.

We are collecting the satchels throughout the year until December 10.

For more information, knitting patterns or to receive empty satchels and to coordinate delivery or pick up, please contact:

**For Baltimore area:** Rev. K. Robert Schmitt (k.robert.schmitt@comcast.net) or call him at 410-746-0236

**For New England:** Email Ruth Setaro (ruthsetaro@snet.net) or call her at 203-687-2177.

**All other regions:** Email Jeni Janis (jeni@sihny.org) or call her at 212-677-4800 (ext. 1218).

Or mail satchels or your donation marked "Christmas-at-Sea" to:  
Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, New York, NY 10003.

Or visit [www.SIHNyC.org](http://www.SIHNyC.org) to find out more or to make a donation online. 

Every crew member  
on a ship regardless of  
their faith or  
nationality will open  
their satchels, each  
containing:

**ONE SWEATSHIRT**  
Hooded or unhooded  
(size M-L-XL)

**THREE PAIRS  
OF SOCKS**  
Thermal or gym

**ONE T-SHIRT**  
(size M-L-XL)

**ONE KNITTED  
WINTER CAP**  
(matching scarf  
optional)

**ONE CAN OF NUTS OR  
LARGE BAR OF  
CHOCOLATE**

**A HOLIDAY OR  
CHRISTMAS CARD  
FROM YOU!**



Seafarers aboard Hapag Lloyd's Antwerpen Express received their Christmas-At-Sea satchels in December 2018. Photo by Port Chaplain Arnd Braun-Storck.

Christmas-At-Sea is supported by countless individuals, youth and senior groups, congregations and is sponsored by International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots; Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association; and Seafarers International Union (SIU). Thank you!



# PROGRAMS & EVENTS

## Sunset Cruise aboard the working Pilot Boat New York

**September 12, 5 - 9 PM - \$200 pp**

Join us for the unique experience of being on a working Pilot Boat in New York Harbor during sunset time. This is a rare opportunity to take in the Manhattan skyline and views of the Statue of Liberty while sipping cocktails and mingling with other supporters. The fundraiser benefits The Marine Society of the City of New York and Seafarers International House and is sponsored by the Sandy Hook Pilots Association. ⚓



Amazing skyline in the evening light of the Sunset Cruise 2018. Photo by Henryk Behnke.

## In Their Words - Setting the Course 2019 Banquet Honorees

### KATHLEEN "KATE" HUNT

Vice President, SIU Government Services Division

I wish to thank Seafarers International House for all their help to Seafarers, for ministering to them and bringing the Word of God to their ships, for providing lodging in a wonderful city, but sometimes lonely city, for providing them with dignity, kindness and human companionship, and all the tender mercies ...

### LOIS K. ZABROCKY

President & CEO, International Seaways

As we look forward to growing International Seaways, we are delighted to support Seafarers International House, as you help to relieve the isolation that many seafarers feel when they are separated from their families. Thank you to Seafarers International House for all of your outreach to sailors.

### ENRICO "RICKY" ESOPA

SIU's ITF Coordinator for the U.S. East Coast

I am fortunate to witness the work of Seafarers International House upfront through the work of their Port Chaplains. Time and time again we meet up on ships and I see first-hand the important work these chaplains do. I get to see the appreciation, the gratitude, the respect that seafarers have for them. Their work is endless and unselfish and I'm grateful to observe the time and patience they have for seafarers.



Outstanding Friends of Seafarers Award recipients: from left Enrico "Ricky" Esopa, Lois K. Zabrocky, Kathleen "Kate" Hunt, and Bill Woodhour. Photo by Henryk Behnke.

### BILL WOODHOUR

President & CEO, Maersk Line, Limited

Seafarers International House stands as a beacon of hope and hospitality for seafarers who find themselves far from home and in need of assistance physically, mentally and or spiritually. Sometimes the largest cities can be the loneliest places and SIH's efforts help make the world smaller and warmer. I applaud your mission and the dedicated, hands-on staff who carry it out every day. On behalf of Maersk and all our grateful seafarers, I am honored to receive the 2019 Outstanding Friend of the Seafarer Award. ⚓

## MISSION & PEOPLE SERVED

Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants. SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in maritime ports on the Eastern Seaboard and in an 84-room Guesthouse in New York City serving a total of about 29,000 people including over 17,000 seafarers visited and almost 6,000 lodging nights for seafarers, asylees, and domestic violence and local disaster victims. SIH provides its services to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, or family/parental status.

We are making the most of your contributions: 84% of our revenue is spent on programs, only 16% on administration and fundraising.

## A PLACE TO FIND ... ROMANCE

By Cindy Hawkins

The SIH Guesthouse near Union Square is a unique place. With its 84 guest rooms it is ideal for youth or senior groups, single travellers, and, of course, seafarers and asylees. Our neighbor, Cindy Hawkins has another story:

*"Seafarers International House might also be a great place to find romance. I did!!*

Years ago, I was mentoring an adult ESL student in the guesthouse; a man from West Africa, who was in the process of becoming documented. That was way before SIH started the Assistance to Asylum Seekers program. By now, he is a proud United States citizen, with a wife and kids that enjoy all that is good in America, while honoring and respecting their West African heritage.

One afternoon in September 2005, my student and I were in the lobby when a portly seafarer in overalls approached us. He began, "Excuse me? The receptionist

*told me you are a teacher. May I wait here and maybe, we can talk about lessons?"*

That ... was Ricardo. And by June 2008 "Old Salt wedded Ripe Tomato." See photo below.

Yes, *Seafarers International House* is full of surprises!! In your wonderful building, I taught English, helped a man become a citizen. Oh, and incidentally ... I ended up finding a husband!!"



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For more information about our social work outreach to seafarers, asylum seekers and trips to detention centers to visit with immigrant detainees, email Pastor Marsh Drege ([drege@sihnyc.org](mailto:drege@sihnyc.org)) or call him at (212) 677-4800 X 1204.

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Seafarers International House



*Beginning scene of the new 5-minute video describing the mission of Seafarers International House. View it on the web site [www.sihnyc.org](http://www.sihnyc.org) or YouTube. Filmed by Noah Leon.*

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