During this pandemic new immigration is at almost a standstill, but refugees and asylum seekers who are already in central Texas are acutely impacted and need our help. Congregation Beth Israel (CBI) and Temple Beth Shalom (TBS) are beginning a joint project to address the most pressing needs: food, rental assistance and internet access.

YOU CAN HELP NOW!

1. Donate money to the TBS Refugee Fund between now and June 30th. We have a matching gift donation so the first $3,500 will be matched one for one. We will work with Refugee Services of Texas (RST) and the Austin Sanctuary Network (ASN) to distribute funds to the most pressing needs in these communities. Please contribute soon: rents are due this week! Donations can be made to the Temple Beth Shalom Refugee Task Force by going to: https://www.bethshalomaustin.org/give. You will then be directed to the donations page and will have to select the Refugee Task on the Donation menu.

2. Sign up on the RST website to be a volunteer. Online volunteer training sessions are ongoing now. (https://www.rstx.org/make-an-impact/rst-online-volunteer-training.html) If you are already a RST volunteer, sign up to partner with a family and have food delivered to them. This is a critical need right now. Go to the Volunteer Hub to sign up for these opportunities or any other opportunities as well. Contact is Lynn Burdick (see below)

3. We are also partnering with ASN to help provide weekly food assistance for up to 20 families. These families will hopefully transition to the new ASAP (Asylum Seeker Assistance Program) program at RST but that will take one to two months and they need help now. Food needs are about $40 to $100 per family (depending on the size). You can provide funds, gift cards, buy food, deliver food or drop food off at a central location. We can connect you to ASN or directly to a family in need. For more information, contact Russ Apfel at russapfel@yahoo.com.

4. Donate working Laptops and tablets (new or used). If you have old laptops or tablets start collecting these now and watch for instructions to drop these off in the coming weeks. Cathy Campbell at cathybquilter@gmail.com will be the key contact for computer donations or you contact Lynn Burdick, the Volunteer Coordinator at Refugee Services of Texas, and arrange a time to drop off. lburdick@rstx.org

Contact Russ Apfel at russapfel@yahoo.com or Cathy Campbell at cathybquilter@gmail.com if you have questions.