

It takes a village:

Students, staff, and community lend support to those affected by ICE

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When Jerry's Foods worker Bryn Osborne learned her coworker, Ivan Gomez, had been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, she was shocked. "It all was just very devastating," she said.

On the morning of Jan. 12, ICE agents laid in wait in the public parking behind Jerry's.

"They were stopping people based on what they looked like and asking for their documents," Osborne said.

The agents apprehended and

detained Gomez, who had worked in the Jerry's deli for 11 years.

Immediately, a coworker called Osborne, who was not working a shift at the time. As union steward at Jerry's, Osborne's coworkers knew she had access to legal resources and could respond. Osborne arrived at the store, where she found out that ICE had taken Gomez to a detention facility in Texas without verifying his immigration status.

"Right now they can do whatever they want, whether or not it's legal," Osborne said. "We filed a habeas corpus petition almost immediately for him to

stay in Minnesota, but they transferred him to Texas anyway. They can transfer people wherever they want while they are waiting for proceedings to happen."

His disappearance was felt by his family and coworkers alike.

"We're all very close at the store," Osborne said. "We've worked with him forever. His children had to go home that night and not have their dad, and they didn't know where he was, and that continued for two weeks. And not having him [at work] was a big hole. We were all thinking about him and wondering how he was doing."

In pursuit of democracy and the rule of law

Within the classroom and outside of it, EHS teachers have also been taking action.

"I have not seen exhibits or guarantees that the federal government won't act without impunity," Geometry and Multivariable Calculus teacher Jenny Stone said. "To that end, I want to make sure I protect myself and my community members."

Stone is an ICE community builder, which she describes as a "mutual aid piece."

According to Stone, community builders determine the solution to questions such as "who needs food, who is feeling fearful, [and] how can we, as a community, serve and stand in the gap for our neighbors?" It's one of three organized response groups, the others being rapid responders and patrol groups.

Stone's responsibilities include supplying food, ensuring the food at food shelves gets to families in need, encouraging civic engagement such as caucusing, documenting ICE's location and actions using messaging apps like Signal or Proton, and making sure the community is aware of their civil rights.

"I believe in order for a democracy

to survive, one of the core principles is that you are informed, you care for your neighbor, you hold your elected officials accountable, and you assure due process," she said. "I am not [doing this for] activism. I am [doing this for] civic awareness. I believe in fairness, dignity, and the rule of law."

Despite response groups' intent to protect others, safety concerns remain.

During one instance, Stone followed the ICE agents' cars to keep the community informed of their location and activity. "Because they are not following the law in certain circumstances, like they have cars with no plates, they're kind of easy to pick out," she said.

The agents then looked up her license plate number — "[I have one] because I'm a law-abiding citizen," Stone said — found out where her car was registered, and began to drive to her house.

"They parked outside. I think this was [to say], 'I know where you live,'" she said. "Which [I know], having a license plate means law enforcement knows where I live, well yeah."

Cultural Geography and AP African American Studies teacher Courtney Major is a constitutional observer, a "trained community member who calmly observes and documents law enforcement activity to help ensure constitutional rights are respected and to support accountability," according to the Minnesota DFL.

Major has also been active in different mutual aid groups, mostly near her home. In school, she is watchful of students who may need more support.

For both Stone and Major, broaching these topics in class is not a daunting endeavor.

"When students are drawing comparisons between the content of my classes and the current situation, I have been engaging them in the conversation as it relates to my curriculum," Major said. "I give them that space and answer any salient questions."

Stone thinks of it as her responsibility as a teacher to help students think critically and teach them their civic duties.

"I am neither ashamed nor embarrassed about what I'm doing," she said.

She also described ICE's actions in the Twin Cities as "very siloed" due to its size and how in certain neighborhoods, residents are entirely closed off to the events occurring in

other ones. Stone believes the lack of awareness concerning others' experiences contributes to this issue.

"Developing empathy for others and understanding how others in our democracy are being treated is paramount. That's what's missing," she said. "If some people don't have personal experiences, they're having a hard time understanding that others in our community are having personal experiences. Roosevelt High School was attacked and Edina was not, so people don't think it's going to happen here. That's what's scary for me."

A community coming together to protect each other

From the community, the mission remains the same: to support Edina students and families.

Osborne said that she and Gomez's family are grateful for the outpouring of support they received.

"My store and other grocery stores know our community members, we feed them every day, and we've really seen the love and care from our customers come back toward the grocery community," Osborne said. "Obviously you run into some people every once in a while who aren't supportive, but it's been overwhelmingly positive."

Gomez's experience is not uncommon. As of early February, over 700 habeas corpus petitions — motions to reverse ICE action based on the false arrest of an individual staying in the country legally — have been filed this year in Minnesota alone, a sharp rise from 10 or fewer petitions filed per month in the past.

Organizations like the Edina Somali American Community (ESAC) have released statements on ICE activities, calling on the district to show signs of support.

ESAC emailed the superintendent and school board members requesting they issue a districtwide message reinforcing the school district's stance on the value of Somali American students and families and that they encourage district staff to support student emotional security, intervene against hate speech, and provide affected students with resources.

"It is critical that the district respond with clear, visible leadership to affirm the humanity and belonging of our students and to protect their well-being during this moment of heightened risk," the ESAC email wrote.

Local community organization Edina Asian American Alliance wrote in a supporting statement: "Leadership—especially public leadership—is so important to setting the tone and upholding the character and standards of our greater culture. EAAA empathizes deeply with the Somali community at this moment."

In addition, a group of community members including cultural liaisons, Edina Public Schools staff, district office members, and the directors of the Edina Education Fund and Edina Give and Go gathered a few weeks ago to discuss

how they could best serve Edina staff and families in need.

They came up with Hornet Cares, a subsidiary fund of the Edina Education Fund for families "facing temporary hardship." As a statement on their website reads, the fund's purpose is to "bring much-needed help to our friends and neighbors who are in need." The webpage also lists volunteer opportunities and immigration resources.

Edina Public Schools also maintains a list of immigration resources on its website.

"Edina Public Schools remains fully committed to the physical and emotional safety of every student and staff member," Superintendent Dan Bittman said in an email Jan. 26 sharing such resources with district families.

As ICE agents continue to operate near schools across the state, some students have stopped coming to EHS at all for their safety. Staff are working to support those students and provide them with the resources they need.

"Students are fearful to come to school regardless of their legal status. They are fearful because of the amount of melanin they have in their skin," Stone said. "I understand that fearfulness, and teachers are doing their best to support students and families living in that fear right now."

Teachers are adapting to students' declining attendances or shifts to online learning on a case-by-case basis and are also trying to support affected students emotionally.

"I have been trying to be vigilant about which students might be experiencing excessive stress because of situations out of their control involving ICE," Major said.

The ideals of community unity, empathy, and support persist for Stone, who, despite adversity, is resolved to fight forward.

"It has not been very safe to be an active participant in democracy," she said, "but that doesn't mean I'm not going to do it."



Habeas corpus petition

(Noun) /həˈbeɪəs kɔːpəs, həˈbeɪəs kɔːpəs/

Motions to reverse ICE action based on the false arrest of an individual staying in the country legally.



Past or current, EHS students are making a difference for others

After Gomez was taken, the atmosphere of Jerry's changed. Osborne, an alumni of Edina High School, arranged for more regular check-ins with coworkers, walking people to their cars and providing easy access to additional resources. She and her coworkers also talked to Jerry's corporate to ensure people are familiar with their rights and Jerry's policies.

Osborne organized a GoFundMe to pay the legal expenses to get Gomez home and support his family in the meantime. Hundreds of community donations have raised over \$22.5 thousand out of its goal of \$30 thousand.

"Ivan has taken care of our community for many many years," Osborne said.

"It's time that we as a community take care of him and make sure that money won't be a reason he is not with his family. That should not be something they have to worry about during this time."

Bryn Osborne

Given the petition, ICE had seven days to either schedule a bond hearing for Gomez or release him. Osborne and others prepared legal documents for a bond hearing, but after seven days with no action, ICE had to release him.

Gomez arrived home on the night of Jan. 25 after

thirteen days in the facility, but he still faces a legal struggle to avoid deportation.

While Osborne and others are raising money to support detained Edina residents, current EHS students are responding to increased ICE presence in their own ways.

Senior Lauren Lock's family has volunteered their home as a food dropoff spot over the last three months, where they collect supplies and distribute them to people afraid to leave their homes due to ICE. Lock said the food dropoff supports a dozen families.

"Helping out and taking care of each other, especially when people are struggling, is [a way] you can give back to people even if you don't know them," Lock said.

Others are using protest to make a difference. Freshman Lila Jani participated in the EHS walkout against ICE in January and has attended additional protests in Minneapolis.

"[At the protest], I walked around for a few hours at least, just raising signs and walking around peacefully," Jani said. "We were trying to spread awareness with other people who had the same ideas as us."

For Jani, a crucial turning point was the murder of Renee Good, the 37-year-old Minneapolis resident fatally shot by ICE agents in early January.

"The very basis of what ICE stands for is just wrong and goes against what America should stand for as a country. They're doing more harm than good," Jani said. "The moment we can all realize what ICE stands for is [the moment] when we can finally present a fully united front and actually do something about it."

