News
Social Justice

People sign the Nuns on the Bus motorcoach at the Circle Resource Center Oct. 8 in Chicago. (GSR photo/Dan Stockman)

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It is amazing being part of the Nuns on the Bus cross-country trek, one Catholic sister said, but it is the people they're meeting along the way that are truly inspiring.

The Nuns on the Bus, a project of the Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, brought its "Vote Our Future" tour to Chicago Oct. 8 for a site visit at the Circle Resource Center, a sponsored ministry of the Society of Helpers. The two-and-a-half-week journey began Sept. 30 in Philadelphia and will take them to 20 different stops, ending in San Francisco Oct. 18. Along the way, the bus will be filled with a rotating group of 15 sisters and 15 advocacy representatives.

Sr. Barbara Pfarr, of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, said it has been a wonderful experience getting to know the other four sisters and five advocates, not to mention Network staff, on the bus.

"Everybody's just so committed and so friendly," Pfarr said. "But what's really fabulous is the places we visit. It's just thrilling because you're meeting the most wonderful people."

The Oct. 8 visit to the Circle Resource Center introduced the bus riders to Society of Helpers Sr. Alicia Gutierrez, the center's executive director, who explained the work the center does. It opened in 2013 and is a community center for women who are recent immigrants.

Sr. Alicia Gutierrez speaks at the Nuns on the Bus stop at the Circle Resource Center Oct. 8 in Chicago, where she is executive director. (GSR photo/Dan Stockman)

"Women from other countries go through a difficult time trying to make this place their home," Gutierrez told a press conference after the site visit. "They are lonely and suffer from depression and anxiety."

The center provides resources, support and programming to a population of women it says are overburdened with responsibilities and often marginalized by institutionalized discrimination or abuse.

"This is a place for women who need friends," Gutierrez said. "A place to keep their hope in this country alive."

Bus rider Sr. Louise Lears, of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, said she had planned to take notes at each stop the bus made, but was so enthralled each time that she forgot.

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"I didn't take a single note," Lears told the press conference. She called the Circle "an encouraging community where women address the needs they have through each other."

Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati Sr. Sally Duffy told the press conference the Nuns on the Bus tour is about making sure everyone thrives, with no exceptions.

Sr. Sally Duffy speaks at the Nuns on the Bus stop at the Circle Resource Center Oct. 8 in Chicago. (GSR photo/Dan Stockman)

"We're calling all Catholics and all people of goodwill to be multi-issue voters, because we live multi-issue lives," Duffy said. "This is our opportunity to vote and hold our elected leaders accountable."

Network started the Nuns on the Bus tours in 2012; this is the eighth tour and the first in-person tour since 2018, after the 2020 tour was held virtually because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Network Executive Director Mary Novak, an associate of the Congregation of St. Joseph, said when the tour was announced July 23 that there is an unprecedented push to take away hard-won rights from Americans. That makes it important for people to be multi-issue voters.

While single-issue voters make electoral decisions based on one concern, such as abortion, Network says many issues are "equally sacred," including being healthy, having a healthy planet, having a vibrant democracy, a strong social safety net, freedom from harm, and a nation that is welcoming and values dignity and human rights.

Duffy said we are called to speak up for one another through our democratic rights.

"We are counting on you to make that sacred effort and vote so that everybody thrives," she said. "No exceptions."

This story appears in the **Nuns on the Bus** feature series. View the full series.