

MEET OUR STAFF



Sally Pillay, Program Director

Sally's commitment to immigrant rights began in 2008 as an intern with the organization. Bearing witness to the impact prolonged isolation has on the psyche of immigrants in detention instilled in her a passion to continue to fight to end the incarceration of immigrants and asylum seekers. As a social worker, Sally supervises social work interns who are involved in the visitation program, including advocacy for both detained and recently released individuals. Sally works to build partnerships with local community members, immigration organizations and attorneys (legal services) to help serve as a sponsor organization for asylum seekers released from detention, and providing humanitarian support and advocacy services to them. She also serves on the board of the Northern NJ Sanctuary Committee. spillay@firstfriendsnjny.org

Rosa Santana, Visitation Coordinator

A native of Honduras, Rosa became involved in immigrant rights in 2011 after witnessing the injustice of detention and the impact on her own family being separated by a broken system. She joined First Friends as a volunteer, visiting immigrants in detention. Her devotion and commitment to the cause, has led Rosa to join the staff. Rosa manages volunteers, recruits, trains and mentors new volunteers to visit immigrants to visit detention facilities. Her advocacy efforts are surrounded by engaging with detainees in all facilities and monitoring detention conditions in meeting the needs of the detainees. rsantana@firstfriendsnjny.org

Volunteers – Most of First Friends work is accomplished by volunteer board members, office workers, social work interns, community groups and houses of worship.

First Friends NJ NY
53 S. Hackensack Ave.
Kearny, NJ 07032

Please support our work by visiting firstfriendsnjny.org
We depend on your donations.

Please donate!

First Friends of New Jersey and New York is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization and your donation is tax-deductible.

(908) 965.0455 • FirstFriendsNJNY.org • info@firstfriendsnjny.org



OUR MISSION

We uphold the inherent dignity and humanity of detained immigrants and asylum seekers. We provide compassion and hope through volunteer visitation, resettlement assistance and advocacy in NJ & NY.

a beacon of hope...

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

■ ■ Thank you, First Friends, for the positive energy you brought into our lives. May you swim in the blue ocean of joy, dance in the golden light and laugh in the raging river of life. Of all the friends I've ever had, there is no one as special as you. ■ ■

— Franklyn, an asylum seeker from Nigeria who was detained for over 18 months, writes to thank First Friends



Educate yourself. Invite First Friends to speak at your school, group or congregation. Visit first-friendsnjny.org to request a speaker. Conduct a small group around immigration, detention and justice.

Visit a detainee. Detainees need contact with people outside of detention. Volunteers provide an important support to those without friends or family nearby.

Stamp Out Despair. Many detainees lack the finances to contact friends and family. We distribute stationary, envelopes and stamps to more than 2,000 individuals detained in five facilities. Monetary donations for phone cards enhance this program.

Be a pen pal. Write letters of encouragement and hope to lift the spirits of detainees.

Aid in post-release. Help provide or set-up housing for released asylum seekers. Welcome them into the community with meals, clothing or accompaniment to appointments..

Engage in advocacy. Contact legislators on immigration laws, be a voice for detainees, join us for vigils and rallies.

Help answer hotline. Spanish and English-speaking volunteers answer toll-free calls from detention centers. Be the first voice of friendship.

Make a donation. First Friends relies on individual donations. Support the professional services we provide.

To make a donation, visit FirstFriendsNJNY.org

[Donate](#)



■ ■ Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door! ■ ■

OUR WORK

Boko Haram was torturing "J" and his family in Nigeria. The terrorists killed his father and beat him. He fled to the US after a dangerous four month long journey, thinking he would be safe and warmly welcomed. He presented himself at the border, and was immediately shackled and put in jail with no ability to contact anyone. In the detention center, he saw First Friends' phone number and called. First Friends' volunteer, "SS," visited J.

Currently almost 400,000 people are detained annually for immigration violations in the U.S. More than 2,000 immigrants are held in mandatory detention in the state of New Jersey.

SS began visiting detainees when someone recommended First Friends. "When I met J, he was still in shock and disbelief that the US pays prisons to hold asylum seekers. He was despairing and scared for his health. Each week we spent time talking about religion, families, and current events. I sat and listened and was present. He talked about his hope for working after his release. I am inspired by his resilience and hopefulness and love for our country despite everything he has endured."

■ ■ I am happy to know that good people like you still exist in this cruel world. ■ ■

— Mateo, a former detainee from Mexico, writes to thank First Friends for the stamps and stationery sent through our Stamp Out Despair campaign

Detention Centers we serve:

Elizabeth Detention Center – Elizabeth, NJ
Hudson County Correctional Facility – Kearny, NJ
Delaney Hall – Newark, NJ
Essex County Jail – Newark, NJ
Bergen County Jail – Hackensack, NJ