



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: Sheriff Mike Downey

BUS OF VENEZUELAN'S DROPPED OFF IN KANKAKEE YESTERDAY

December 22, 2023- Kankakee, IL – On the morning of December 21, 2023, at approximately 7:30 AM, law enforcement officers from the Kankakee Police Department, Kankakee County Sheriff's Office, and Illinois State Police (Troop 5) responded to a situation at a gas station in the 3400 south block of Rt 45/52. The call pertained to a busload of migrants, numbering between 30 to 40 individuals, who had been dropped off in the gas station's parking lot.

Upon arrival, officers discovered multiple groups, some of whom had started walking on the highway and expressway while wrapped in blankets. Subsequent conversations with approximately 11 individuals, comprising seven adults and four children who remained at the gas station, revealed that the bus had initiated its journey in El Paso, TX. The occupants were dropped off at the gas station around 4:30 AM, with the bus driver erroneously informing them that they had reached Chicago, their intended destination. The passengers, hailing from Venezuela, were left without money, food, adequate clothing, and were under the impression that they had reached their destination.

In a coordinated effort, local law enforcement agencies arranged transportation for those remaining at the scene to Midway Airport, utilizing the services of a local bus company. Additionally, officers provided rides out of the county to several occupants who had begun walking on the roadways.

Sheriff Mike Downey expressed ongoing efforts to identify those responsible for abandoning the individuals at the gas station. Due to concerns about potential future incidents, the County of Kankakee has filed an Emergency Declaration with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. Sheriff Downey emphasized the



limited resources available to accommodate such situations, comparable to the assistance provided in Chicago.

Acknowledging the collaborative efforts of local law enforcement agencies, Sheriff Downey highlighted the community's fortune in facilitating the necessary transportation for the individuals in need. He urged local residents and motorists to promptly report any buses appearing to prepare for dropping off a large group of occupants anywhere in the County of Kankakee by dialing 911.