



Bruce | OIDO case manager

Reaching Across Cultures



A lifelong Texan, Bruce lives in the Dallas area and is a dad to a sports-obsessed family. Bruce and his wife both coach whatever sport is in season for their three kids—a labor of love that takes up just about every free moment outside of work.

After beginning his career in the military, Bruce worked for U.S. Border Patrol before becoming an immigration officer. One of his first encounters as a Border Patrol Agent was a 19-year-old who had been previously deported by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and was trying to come back. During their conversation, Bruce imagined the young man's struggle and started to get emotional. He always wondered how the rest of the man's story unfolded.

Bruce's career path has also been inspired by his wife, a medical professional. He's observed the impact of her strong connections and the depth of her compassion for her patients, and realized that he wanted to create deep human connections in his own work. As a Border Patrol Agent, Bruce was all too familiar with the desperate measures some people would take to cross into the U.S.—sometimes, tragically, at the expense of their own lives. The grief and helplessness Bruce felt made him realize he needed a career that opened more opportunities to help people.

He's since joined the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO) and says, "I've enjoyed every second of it since I started."

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

With each new facility to which Bruce is assigned, he immerses himself thoroughly, getting to know people in each section and determining with the facility a path to working together.

Clear communication with detainees is equally crucial to doing his job effectively. With each detainee he meets, he starts the conversation by asking: "How's your day going? Tell me what's going on with you." Once they get more comfortable, he asks about the complaint because by then, it's more of a free-flowing chat than a structured interview.

BRINGING COMFORT AND CLOSING GAPS

Bruce met detainees from an African country who spoke a language no one in the facility could speak and had trouble locating interpretation services.

One detainee, experiencing mental distress from both a medical condition that caused him to be bullied by other detainees and uncertainty about the outcome

of his pending immigration case, was placed on suicide watch. At the same time, he had refused medical treatments that would have helped his condition. Bruce was able to take extra time with the man, who was frightened and could not bring himself to trust someone from the government. After their conversation, the man felt comfortable starting the treatment, and his health improved quickly.

BRINGING PRESENCE TO PRAYER

Bruce received a complaint that, as Ramadan approached, there were not enough prayer mats in the facility for Muslim detainees. Bruce followed up with the chaplain and warden, who found a family in the community that was happy to donate more than 30 prayer mats. The family had its own immigration story, having escaped from Afghanistan during the invasion of Russia in the 1980s.

"This event was inspirational to me because the request initially came from someone not of the Muslim faith but from a Jewish man," Bruce says. "For the Muslim detainees to receive the prayer mats, it took multiple people from different backgrounds to care about each other. Although this was a very small action, this action just made me think of how much good there is in the world when people care for each other."

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

Favorite dish

Chili dog

Hobby

Collecting football and basketball cards.

Favorite movie or show

"24"

Biggest accomplishment outside of work

Coaching his son's team to a little league football championship.

Favorite book

"How to Win Friends & Influence People," by Dale Carnegie

Favorite quote

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." —Maya Angelou



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