



Welcoming the Stranger

A newsletter published by Migration and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

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Upcoming Events

- December 22nd: **Christmas Party for Refugee Children**, 12-3 pm We need some Christmas Elves! If you can help with donations of gifts, baking or volunteering, please call Stacy Dever at 216-939-3708.
- January 27th and 28th: Two part **Mentor Training**. 5:30-7:30 pm. St. Augustine Towers 7800 Detroit Ave. Parking available at 7821 Lake Ave behind the building. Please register for class with Stacy Dever 216-939-3708.

From the Director



Tom Mrosko
Director

Resettling Iraqi refugees in the USA is not unusual. In the early 1990's the US resettled thousands of Kurdish refugees after the Gulf War. Currently, Iraq is dealing with one of the largest humanitarian and displacement crises in the world.

At present, there are 1.5 million refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria as well as 2.5 million internally displaced individuals in Iraq itself. Some have been attacked or threatened because of their political opinion, ethnicities, religious affiliations, or professions. Many have been at-

tacked because of their close work with the American military, US contractors, and media. Despite these atrocities, and sheer numbers of refugees, the United States was slow to resettle refugees initially.

Fortunately, over the past 12 months the number of Iraqi Refugees in the USA and Cleveland has increased. MRS in Cleveland is adapting to the new and different needs that this population arrives with. For example, many resettled Iraqi refugees hold advanced degrees and have worked in various professions including engineering, medicine, computer engineers, and accountants in Iraq. Once in Cleveland, many are facing the realities of these difficult economic times and take jobs that they feel don't contribute as much as they would like to contribute to the United States.

Would you please help us network with your friends and parishioners in order to help us find jobs for these highly trained and educated Iraqi refugees? I would also like to see more volunteers, who would be willing to work with these individuals directly by helping them fill out applications for school and jobs, research re-credentialing for their degrees or professions and, finally, helping our office assist the Iraqi refugees in their adjustment here in the USA.

Thank you so much and I hope that you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas.



New Friends Among Us

"We call upon all people of good will, to welcome the newcomers in their neighborhoods and schools, in their places of work and worship, with heartfelt hospitality, openness, and eagerness both to help and to learn from our brothers and sisters of whatever religion, ethnicity, or background."

—Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops



Stacy Dever
Volunteer
Coordinator

Building Hope in the City Opens Eyes and Hearts to Refugees

Building Hope in the City (BHITC) was founded in 2003 out of Trinity Lutheran Church as an urban mission and ministry organization. Its goal was to start new urban ministries and congregations in addition to helping existing ones experience renewal and vitality in serving their communities.

They felt the Lord's call to do more in 2006 when Burundian refugees started to enter the community. BHITC encouraged partner churches to join Catholic Charities' mission of *Welcoming the Stranger*. Since the partnership they have reached out to Burmese and Bhutanese refugees, while continuing their work with African refugees through English instruction, tutoring, citizenship preparation and mentoring.

BHITC has several mentor teams working directly with families from Burma, Bhutan and Somalia. The mentors have made a huge impact on the families' resettlement process. The mentors have assisted families with grocery shopping, tutoring, learning how to take the bus and finding jobs. "It's been so rewarding to work with these families. I learn more about them and myself each time I visit them," said Luanne Bolebecker. Mentors have also shared the joy of first experiences with popcorn, visits to the zoo and picnics in the park. BHITC helps Christian volunteers find meaningful new ways to live out their faith by serving in the city.



Hope in the City Volunteers

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Welcoming the Stranger

Overview of Our Services

Cleveland Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services is one of 104 national affiliates of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. As the largest resettlement office in Northern Ohio, we expect to serve over 225 refugees and asylees this year.

MRS provides vast resettlement services designed to aide refugees become self-sufficient as soon as possible. Staff members offer employment services and case management services in culturally appropriate languages and customs. Currently our staff of ten speaks ten different languages. MRS has a robust volunteer program geared at providing an avenue for volunteers to share their most special gifts and talents in a way that will serve refugees. MRS provides training and direction for volunteers.



Dennis Morgan
Employment
Training Coordinator



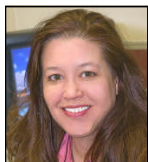
Julie Bell
Employment
Training Coordinator



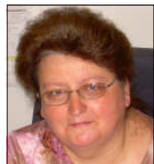
Khwater Nayef
Program Aide



Abdi Nuno
Case Manager



Sandra Ortegon
Office Manager



Jenny Kutsar
Case Manager



Martin Dek
Case Management
Coordinator

Why Should I Hire Refugees?

- Catholic Charities MRS Service Support
- Pre-Screened by Homeland Security Department
- Reliability
- Dedication and Loyalty
- Resourcefulness
- Strong Desire to Work
- Catholic Charities MRS Service Support
- Pre-Screened by Homeland Security Department
- Reliability
- Dedication and Loyalty
- Resourcefulness

Pay It Forward

This summer MRS started a language exchange program called Around the World in Five Weeks. Refugee students were able to give back to the community while enhancing their own language skills by teaching American students Karen, Burmese, Swahili, Nepali and Somali. Seventeen refugee students shared their language, culture and story with over 50 American students during a five week time period.

The refugee “teachers” taught American students how to greet and introduce themselves in their native language in addition to counting and learning colors. “The counting and colors were difficult to learn but it was so interesting,” said Magnificat student Abbey Marquard. “It makes me very happy to share my language with others and help them learn,” said Paw No from Burma.

American students were asked to make a donation in exchange for the classes. All the items donated were used to help set up apartments for new arrivals over the summer. “So many people helped me when I first arrived, I am happy to be able to help other refugees and it’s fun to meet new friends,” said Beatrice from Congo.



**Looking to hire?
Call Dennis Morgan
at 216-939-3747!**

Eye Clinic

Dr. Thomas Cliffl, an ophthalmologist who has specialized in ophthalmology for 37 years, held the third annual free eye clinic for Migration and Refugee Services on Tuesday November 3, 2009. Over the past three years Dr. Cliffl has provided free eye exams and glasses to over 300 refugees. Many of the patients have never seen an eye doctor or were unaware that their eye sight could be improved. A Sudanese refugee visited the office for three days in a row after receiving his glasses. He was so overjoyed with his improved eye sight that he wanted to repeatedly thank Dr. Cliffl for his gift of sight.

Dr. Cliffl and his wife Martha have traveled all over the world participating in eye clinics, sometimes performing up to 30 surgeries a day. They have been conducting local eye clinics once a month since 2005. “We have a lot more resources here to help people and we are happy to do this. There is so much need here in Cleveland,” says Martha Cliffl.

Dr. Cliffl has a dedicated team that travels with him to help with the clinics. Members include his wife Martha and their son Matt, Colleen Fraser, Ann and Darrell Holland and Barbara Mueller. All of them have a passion for helping those in need and sharing their gifts.



Volunteer Recognition: Humility of Mary Volunteers

Humility of Mary Service (HMS) is a volunteer program for men and women 18 years and older who collaborate in ministry with HM Sisters and Associates. Volunteers strive to bring more abundant life to people in need by serving in different ministries in the United States and in Chile, South America. In order to empower others, HMS invites generous volunteers to be partners with them in mission and to bring life-giving service and love to people who are poor, weak and oppressed.

Special contact with the Sisters and Associates through work and evenings of prayer and reflection, as well as the opportunity to meet other volunteers who share similar interests and values, make being an HMS volunteer a life-changing experience. This year MRS is pleased to be working with Marie Semple. Marie is a graduate of John Carroll University who is focusing on the health care of refugees this. Marie has been helping refugees schedule doctor’s appointments and has been working closely with local schools to make sure that all the refugee children are up to date with immunizations. Marie has been a tremendous help to MRS and the refugee community.



Marie Semple
HM Volunteer



Volunteer Recognition: Jesuit Volunteer Corps

The Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) is a national and international program based in Baltimore and operated by five local program offices. Thus local JVC staff can continue to understand community needs, retain regional ties and provide the strong personal and programmatic support to the volunteers that is the hallmark of JVC.

Jesuit Volunteers (JVs) make a commitment to serve where the need is greatest, to work with people who are marginalized by society and to live in apostolic community with other JVs. In all, about 250 JVs each year work in the United States and in seven countries around the world.

Hundreds of grassroots organizations across the country count on JVs to provide essential services to low-income people and those who live on the margins of our society. JVs work for and with people who are homeless, unemployed, refugees, people with AIDS, the elderly, street youth, abused women and children, the mentally ill and the developmentally disabled. Since the first Jesuit Volunteers traveled to Copper Valley, AK in 1956, JVC has become the largest Catholic lay volunteer program in the country.

This year MRS is blessed to have JVC Megan Harrison from Irvine, California. Megan graduated from the University of California at Irvine and serves the refugee population by preparing for all new arrivals. She helps locate housing, orders furniture, delivers household items and sets up items for families.



Megan Harrison

Appreciation of Our Donors



Anne Mengerink
Assistant Director

To everyone who has made an investment in the refugees we serve, on behalf of all the staff of MRS, we would like to thank you. We want you to know that your gifts make immediate differences in the lives of our refugees. Through your thoughtfulness and generosity, you are our true partners as we work daily to help improve conditions for the newcomers we are welcoming to Greater Cleveland. This issue we would like to especially thank the following friends of refugees for their gifts:

- Barney Barnovsky
- Julianna Bell
- Alyson Finamore
- Stephanie Heidemann
- Alice Hinkel
- John and Fay Hollis
- Diane Hollis
- David Hollis
- Alex and Erica Intihar
- Denio and Marie Leone
- Yvette Swanson
- Kent Whitley
- William and Jean Whitrock

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland

We are deeply grateful for a \$5000 Good Samaritan grant from the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland to be used for refugee emergency rent assistance.

University School

We appreciate the investment that University School has made through their financial and material support.

To stay in touch with upcoming events as well as current needs, please visit us on the on the web at

www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mrs

Profile of a Refugee

Bway Nay Say does not recall many details of his flight from Burma to the refugee camp. He only remembers walking in the jungle, sometimes sitting on a villager's back to rest and that it took many days to reach the camp. He was only seven years old. His mother had passed away from an unknown illness. There were no doctors or medicine and no one knew what illness caused the mother's suffering. Say's father died in a car crash in Myanmar (Burma). With no place else to go, the newly orphaned boy went to live with his grandmother.

When Bway Nay's aunt, Shee Nay, learned of his situation she sent for her nephew. Say joined the family and they immediately loved him as their own son. After years in a refugee camp in Thailand, this family was finally cleared for resettlement in the United States. Cleveland would be their new home.

Choices for refugees are never easy. Only one percent of refugees make it out of the camps. It's difficult for a family unit to make the list for resettlement and even more difficult for those with additional family members. Shee Nay would not leave for resettlement without her nephew. She would not leave him alone in the camp and she would not separate from him. Bway Nay Say was like the son she and her husband never had. He had been with the family since 2004.

After months of intense interviews and visits, it was determined that Bway Nay should remain with the family and resettle in the United States. They all arrived in Cleveland only a few months ago. The choices are still not easy for this family but they are together, they are here and they are safe.



Mission Statement

We have been carrying out our mission of “welcoming the stranger” and celebrating unity in diversity since 1948. We have welcomed refugees and immigrants arriving from all corners of the globe. We respect the dignity of each person and provide a supportive environment where each individual and culture is celebrated. Building upon the courage and strength of these newcomers, we seek to empower them to achieve self-sufficiency and independence.

Refugee Highlights

- On October 31st, 61 refugees were assisted by the Legal Aid Society, independent immigration attorneys, and a group of law students from local universities in helping refugees adjust their status by filing the petitions for green cards. These refugees are on the pathway to citizenship in 2013.
- Since January, MRS has resettled 230 individuals.
- On October 26th, with the assistance of the Tzu Chi Foundation, MRS distributed 103 winter coats to refugees arriving this year.

Boy Scouts

In Steve Polter’s efforts to become an Eagle Scout, he received 20 computers donated from Clear Channel Radio and he and a friend, Marty Kilroy, refurbished them for the refugees.



Reflection from Bishop Richard Lennon

Many people often use the approaching holiday season as a time to reflect on the blessings in their lives, and in turn reach out to people less fortunate. There is recognition on their part that God has blessed them and they want to share these blessings with others. Whether they realize it or not, they are practicing Stewardship. One of the principle tenets of Stewardship is gratitude for the gifts that God has blessed us with and recognizing that we are responsible to God for how we use these gifts.

In believing that God is the origin of all that we are, we are called to live a life of holiness and in doing so we become ‘gift’ to others. This takes place through the love we offer to our family, friends, community and to the strangers we encounter on our journey through this life. The power of God living in us and through us is to touch the hearts and minds of all we meet. As St. Paul writes, “... God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.” (2 Cor 9:8)

As we reflect on the work and ministry of our Migration and Refugee Services Office we see the blessing that our staff and volunteers have been to those they have helped welcome over the years, but we also know the ‘gift’ that our immigrants, migrants and refugees have been to us as they transform our hearts and minds by the love that is received and given. Continuing on our journey we pray for all whom we encounter, including immigrants, migrants, refugees and all other people. May God’s love be abundant in our response and touch lives in the fullness of God’s grace.



Book Club

On February 25, the Book Club will discuss "Outcasts United". Discussion starts promptly at 7:00 pm at St. Augustine Towers 7800 Detroit. Parking available at 7821 Lake Ave behind the building.

Guest Speakers

If you would like to know more about our services, we would be pleased to arrange a presentation to your organization or group at a mutually agreed upon time and location. Please call Anne Mengerink 216-939-3735 or e-mail her at aemengerink@clevelandcatholiccharities.org to learn more. Thanks!

Please know that we are always grateful for your financial gifts to Migration and Refugee Services. Your cash gift is fully deductible according to the IRS tax code. Please send your check to Migration and Refugee Services, 7800 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44102. For more information, please call Anne Mengerink at 216-939-3735.



Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

7800 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44102

Tom Mrosko, Director

Phone: 216-939-3731; E-mail: txmrosko@clevelandcatholiccharities.org

Stacy Dever, Volunteer Coordinator

Phone: 216-939-3708; E-mail: sdever@clevelandcatholiccharities.org

Anne Mengerink, Assistant Director

Phone: 216-939-3735; E-mail: aemengerink@clevelandcatholiccharities.org

You can also reach us at our General Information number of 216-281-7005!