



Welcoming the Stranger

Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services

APRIL 2011

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **World Refugee Day**
- **Maryan's Donations Internship**
- **A Day in the Life of a Refugee at Work**
- **Homemade Nepali Tea Recipe**

DONATION NEEDS

- **Trash bins**
- **Cleaning supplies**
- **Bake ware**
- **Pillows**
- **Towels**
- **Comforters**
- **Light bulbs**

Tell Me a Story

This issue is dedicated to the stories of brave men and women who come through the doors of MCC Refugee Services. Refugees and asylees have histories to preserve, skills to share, and cultures to celebrate. Stories of their courage and triumph have the ability to transform, heal, and empower tellers and listeners alike.

Telling the Stories of Minnesota's Refugees

MCC Refugee Services is pleased to announce the forthcoming release of their book, "This Much I Can Tell You: Stories of Courage and Hope from Refugees in Minnesota." Thanks to a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant from the Minnesota Historical Society, the book is being produced through the local self-publishing company Beaver's Pond Press.

"This Much I Can Tell You" gives a glimpse into the lives of some of Minnesota's newest refugees. Women and men from Somalia, Bhutan, Iraq, Cameroon, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burma share individual refugee stories that are as diverse as the storytellers. In their own words, they tell about their lives before conflict, why their lives fell apart, their experience as refugees and their transition to Minnesota. This book documents their trauma and tragedy as well as their hopes and dreams for

the future.

"Before we are the displaced and displaced people have no legal status. So now we are so glad to be living in America and get the legal status. We can legally live the center of our lives here, so we are very glad," Saw Josiah, a Karen story teller, says in his chapter.

Besides being refugees, each person represented in this book shares another thing in common—their accessed services at MCC



This painting by Aziz, a local Somali artist, will be featured on the book's cover, courtesy of WellShare International.

Refugee Services. "The refugees we are privileged to work with have journeyed across the globe to find safety in Minnesota. As Minnesotans we know refugees as neighbors, as coworkers, as customers, or as friends. But we don't know their stories. We don't know about their life before they

became refugees or what they went through to find the safety we enjoy. We hope this book will help bring those stories to light so we can know each other better," said Rachele King, director of MCC Refugee Services.

The book will be available on June 1, 2011 through Beaver's Pond Books.

To find out more about "This Much I Can Tell You," visit: www.mnchurches.org/refugeestories.

Twin Cities World Refugee Day



Photo by Kurt Moses from Twin Cities World Refugee Day in 2008.

In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly established June 20th as World Refugee Day, which coincides with Africa Refugee Day. Since 2001, people from around the world have come together around that day to celebrate and honor the world's more than 40 million uprooted people. The occasion honors the bravery and strength of families and individuals who fled their countries and celebrates the vibrant culture and traditions these people bring with them to their new homes. This year, the Twin Cities World Refugee Day will be celebrated on Saturday, June 25 from 12:00 p.m. to

6:00 p.m. at Minnehaha Park in Minneapolis.

The Twin Cities World Refugee Day celebration includes a community resource fair, vendors providing a variety of delicious foods and hand made goods from around the world and entertainment.

Last year's performances included: Himalchuli, a Bhutanese youth dance group, Titambe, an African drum and dance group, Motion Crew, Hmong break dancers, Karen storytellers and more. This year's celebration will include some returning performers as well as new acts. Watch the website for the schedule of

events as it is released.

The Twin Cities has welcomed many immigrants and refugees from all over the world, but now, in 2011, Minnesota is home to the most diverse population ever. Everyone is invited to celebrate the diversity of Minnesota by coming to the Twin Cities World Refugee Day!

You can find out more information at the website: www.tcworldrefugeeday.org

"I like to help people because by the help of people I came here."

This pile of clothing was donated from the Target Corporation. Thanks Target!



Maryan's Donations Internship

Maryan applied for the Donation Inventory Internship at MCC Refugee Services just two months after arriving in the country. She said, "I wanted to feel like I was working, to get experience doing a job in America...and because I like to help people because by the help of people I came here."

Maryan is the first to hold the internship, which was designed as a way for Refugee Services' employment clients to gain professional skills and U.S. work experience. Interns learn skills in the areas of organization, taking inventory, and tracking information on the computer while conducting

their own job search. Her supervisor, Holly Larsen, said, "She's set the bar pretty high. I've been so impressed with her professionalism and enthusiasm for the job."

Maryan had a long journey to come to the U.S. She left Somalia to live in India where she found work as an interpreter and health-worker for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). She helped refugees from around the world navigate and understand the Indian hospital system. Rather than living in camps, refugees in India face a precarious situation where they often stay on the outskirts of towns, unable to find housing without legal documents or the help of an Indian friend.

This feeling of being precariously balanced on the edge of society is

common for many refugees. When they come to the U.S., many have expectations for not only safety and security, but a life like they've seen pictured in American TV and movies. Maryan, however, said that she was not surprised by her challenging reality. Now that she's in the United States, she's taking every opportunity she can to get more professional experience while searching for a job. She said, "Now I know a lot about donations. I'm happy with it...and I especially like MCC." While her primary focus is finding work to support her family, one day she would like to find a job in social services or community work.

Waking up for Work

On the days that he has work, Tek, a refugee from Bhutan, wakes up at 2:00am to prepare food for his lunch. “I take a long time in the kitchen,” he said. Anyone who has had Bhutanese food before would understand that the extra prep-time involved is completely worth it—it’s delicious! At 5:00 a.m. he catches his first bus and transfers onto the second bus at 5:13. When he gets off, he has to walk 8 minutes to his workplace at Wholesale Produce Supply, where his shift begins at 6:00am sharp.

Just getting there seems like a lot of work, but Tek is extremely happy to have his job. He arrived in the U.S. in September, 2010 with an optimistic attitude about his future in Minnesota and an unparalleled eagerness to start working. Months passed, however, and Tek realized, as many refugees do, that getting that first job is more difficult than it seems. He attended MCC Refugee Services’ Job Readiness

Workshop, participated in many practice interview sessions and applied to numerous positions with the help of volunteers and his Employment Counselor. While he continued gaining valuable skills and English practice, he still had no job.

When the Employment Team at MCC met with the Human Resources Director at Wholesale Produce Supply, Tek was one of the first refugees sent to them. He had all the necessary requirements and more than enough commitment and motivation for the position. Since the end of January, Tek has been working as a Tomato Packer with the team. He is responsible for pulling down crates of tomatoes from a stack and emptying them out on the assembly line for the Sorters to go through. He is supposed to do six boxes in one minute and he said that at first this task was difficult for him because it was hard to keep up.

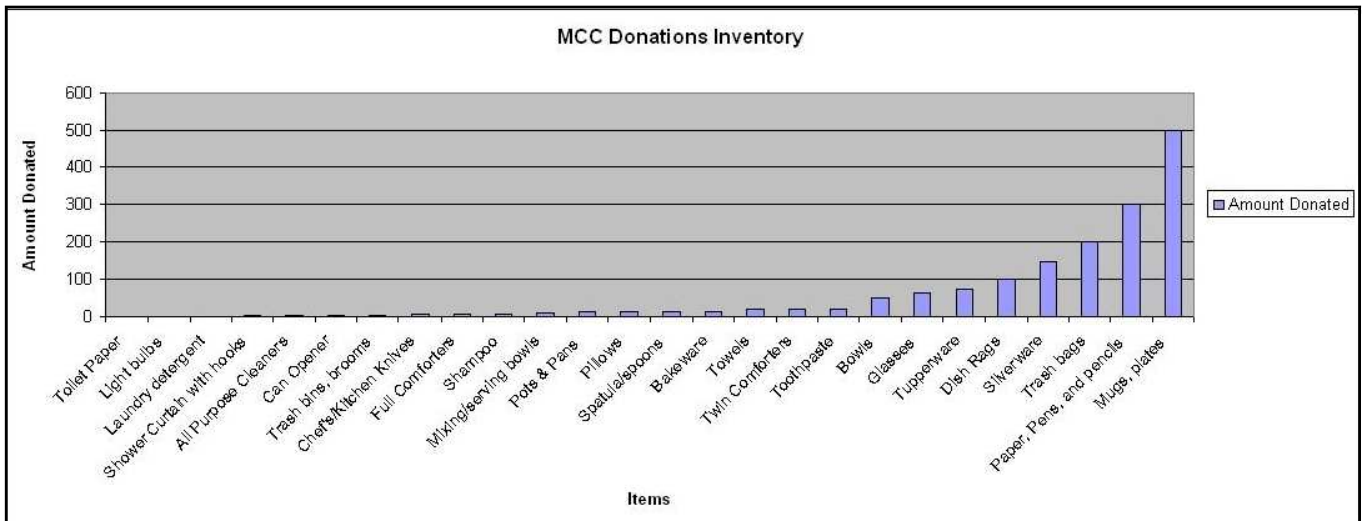
Now Tek reports that his job is going very well- he’s even made friends with other team



Because of Tek’s warm personality, he has made many friends with MCC staff and his coworkers at his new job.

members on his shift. Despite speaking different languages, they’ve been able to communicate through sign language. It really is amazing how much can be conveyed and shared without needing words.

Getting a job is a critical step in a refugee’s adjustment to their new life in Minnesota and Wholesale Produce has been part of it for many refugees in need of jobs.



Thanks to everyone who generously donated to MCC Refugee Services. We’ve had a lot of items come in these past few weeks and want to thank all of the people who dropped off items for refugee families. More household items will be needed for the over 200 people arriving between now and October!



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Minnesota Council of Churches
manifests the unity of the body of Christ and builds
the common good in the world in partnership with
24 member Protestant, Historic Black, and
Orthodox judicatories representing more than
2000 congregations and their one million
members.

Refugee Services Our Mission Statement:

Refugee Services is an ecumenical ministry
welcoming persecuted people from around the
world into new lives of freedom, hope, and
opportunity in Minnesota.

Our Vision:

Refugees are abundantly supported as they move
from addressing basic needs to achieving their
dreams. *And* faith communities are transformed
by partnering in this ministry of hospitality.

Babita's Homemade *Chiya*

Nepali Tea

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 c. water
1 c. milk
2 T loose-leaf black tea (Assam if
available)
2 T sugar (or to taste)
¼ t ground spices (black pepper
and cardamom, or other Indian
spice blend)

Instructions

Bring water to a simmer
Add tea and sugar
Let simmer for 3-5 minutes
Add milk, heat until warm
Strain into cups
Sprinkle with ground spice
Enjoy!



**Babita with her son at home with
her homemade Nepali tea.**