



# Welcoming the Stranger

## Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services

APRIL 2010

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Refugee Services' first free case arrivals
- Thanks to our great employers
- Garage selling with purpose
- Learn how to make Thai iced tea!

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## Free Case Arrivals Update

Many of you heard our appeal for support when Refugee Services received its first 3 free case families in one week. The community response to these families was incredible and we wanted to thank everyone who played a role in supporting these families. The apartments were quickly secured with the help of **Sherman Associates and Halverson Blaiser Group Ltd.** and teams of volunteers speedily assembled to answer the call to provide Suhiza, Mariam and Fatuma's families with abundant support. Members of the **Giving Group, Spirit of Hope Catholic Community, Building Blocks of Islam, St. Anne's Episcopal Church, St. Clement's Episcopal Church, St. John's Lutheran Church of**

**Woodbury, and many more** donated and set up furniture and household items while our friends at **St. Vincent De Paul** gave their time to deliver some of these items. In addition, **individual**



Setting up an apartment

**volunteers** stocked refrigerators with food, met the families at the airport, and helped families to feel safe in their new homes and communities.

After just one short month these families are well on their way to becoming seasoned Minnesotans. They have been to the hospital, know how to pay rent, ride the bus, call 911, and have learned about taking care of their new homes thanks to volunteers who taught them the skills needed to access these resources. Without the help of so many individuals and groups, we would not have been able to fulfill our vision statement: **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.**

**Thank you!**

## Employer Recognition

Refugee Services would like to acknowledge the first-class work of the Employer Advisory Committee (EAC) and several key employers who have contributed to the employment of 25 individuals in the last six months. The employment of 25 individuals benefits a grand total of 72 family members!

Employer Advisory Committee members are individuals with experience related to refugee employment. The EAC meets quarterly and their insight into hiring needs and practices in

Twin Cities area has been invaluable.

**We'd like to thank the following 2009/10 EAC members:**

- Brenna Ramy, Director of Human Resources, Doubletree Hotel
- June Phillips, Regional Human Resources Specialist, Cub Foods Corporate
- Steph Mullen, Human Resources Generalist, Real Estate Equities
- Jeff DeMars, Human Resources Manager, Hilton Hotel
- Mark Westergaard,

Principal Commodity Specialist, Medtronic  
- Theresa Taylor, CEO, Ellis Taylor

We would also like to recognize those businesses that have employed Refugee Services' Employment Services clients in the last six months. They are listed below, with the number of refugees employed since October in parentheses.

**Employers include:**  
ABM Janitorial Services (9)  
McDonalds (Midway, Maryland) (4)

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## Employer Recognition, continued



Kmart (Maryland, Lake Street) (2)  
 JBS Swift (2)  
 Arc Value Village (1)  
 Double Tree Hotel Park Place (1)  
 Park Nicollet Medical Clinic (1)  
 Real Estate Equities (1)  
 Target (Midway) (1)  
 Target Field (1)  
 Town Place Suites (1)

Each of these 25 employed clients is extremely happy and grateful to have a job to sustain themselves and their families.

We'd like to give special thanks to Sarah Ferrell, Refugee Employment Resource Developer AmeriCorps\*VISTA for her great work in creating and maintaining relationships

with these employers, with the result of increased employment placements. Sarah has left MCC and Chhimi Wangchuk and Kathy Klietz have taken on her responsibilities. Feel free to contact either of them with job leads or potential employer contacts.  
[kathy.klietz@mnchurches.org](mailto:kathy.klietz@mnchurches.org)  
[chimmi.wangchuk@mnchurches.org](mailto:chimmi.wangchuk@mnchurches.org)

## Save the Date: World Refugee Day

This year's Twin Cities World Refugee Day celebration is moving dates and times!

Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 5th from 1-5pm. The event this year will be held in Downtown Minneapolis on Hennepin Avenue, between 7th and 8th St. The reason for the move is that this year's celebration will coincide with the opening day of MOSAIC, a Minneapolis celebration of diversity including a multitude of performances and events.

For more information, watch [www.tcworldrefugeeday.org](http://www.tcworldrefugeeday.org). You can also follow them on facebook!

If you've never been to MOSAIC, check out their website and schedule of events at: <http://www.minneapolismosaic.com/>

Don't forget to stop by the Refugee Services booth in the Resource Fair!

## Taking Root: Part II

Taking Root, MCC's new interfaith co-sponsorship program, has officially launched! Taking Root brings together individuals from the Muslim and Christian communities to support a refugee family during their first four months in MN. We'd like to introduce you to our two community organizers.

**Farheen Hakeem** is a well known community organizer in the Twin Cities. She has extensive experience working in the Muslim community through girl-oriented youth

programs, and was featured on the front cover of the New York Times in November of 2007 for her work. A former math teacher, Farheen holds a Bachelors of Mathematics from Oberlin College and lives in South Minneapolis with her foster child.

**Lynea Geinert** has twenty years experience working as a manager of volunteer programs. Most recently she worked for an organization serving low-income people, many of whom were new

Americans. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministries from Bethel University and is pursuing a Master's in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary. Lynea is a candidate for Diaconal Ministry in the ELCA.

Interested in participating? Visit our website and fill out a volunteer interest form: <http://www.mnchurches.org/programs/christian-unity/TakingRoot.html>



Community organizer Lynea Geinert shares about Taking Root at a recent informational event held at Abubakar Mosque.

## Learn about Refugees: RS Staff goes to Thailand



This February, two Refugee Services staff members had the opportunity to visit a Karen refugee camp in Thailand with members of the Association for Refugee Services Professionals ([www.refugeeprofessionals.org](http://www.refugeeprofessionals.org)). Here's a summary of their trip:

We flew into Bangkok, where we had the chance to meet with the overseas

**Mae La Refugee Camp** processing staff and then drove 7 hours to Mae Sot, where we toured Mae Tao clinic for displaced

Burmese. From there, we went to Mae La camp where we observed Cultural Orientation class, learned about UNHCR's work in the refugee camp and in Bangkok, and visited the IOM Refugee Processing Center. Mae La is the largest and oldest of the Karen refugee camps in Thailand.

Surrounded by beautiful mountains and tropical weather, we saw what refugees leave behind when they come to the

United States. It was a reminder of how much courage it takes to leave one's community and everything that is familiar to go to a new place. We also got a glimpse at the complexity of the resettlement process in the context of international politics and non-governmental organizations involved with refugees from Burma. The trip was both a difficult and gratifying experience for both of us, and we were very privileged to have the opportunity to go.



## Donations: Go on a Garage Sale

### Treasure Hunt!

The path traveled to in Minnesota is long, and refugees can only carry one or two bags of belongings with them. You can imagine the difficulty of learning a new culture and language, combined with the need to find a job to support your family. Compounded with a lack of basic furnishings (a bed to sleep on, dishes, soap, etc), these stresses could become overwhelming. To help, Refugee Services gives donated basic items to families, so that they have the energy focus on bigger goals like learning English and becoming job ready. Without donations, our ability to give these items to clients is limited.

If you're a garage sale enthusiast, or are planning a spring cleaning purge, cut out this shopping list and carry it with you in your wallet!

One man's junk\* could be a refugee family's treasure!

Here's another idea: if your church or school is planning a garage sale, ask if you could donate unsold items to Refugee Services when the sale is over!

\*Please select only new or gently used items to donate. Thank you!

#### Clip and Carry Shopping List for Refugee Services Families:

- Dishes/glasses
- Silverware
- Cooking utensils—knives, can openers, spoons, spatulas
- Pots and pans
- Alarm clocks
- Blankets
- Lamps

To donate, contact:  
Dan Huynh  
612-230-3227  
[Dan.huynh@mnchurches.org](mailto:Dan.huynh@mnchurches.org)



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Visit our Website! [www.mnchurches.org](http://www.mnchurches.org)

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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.

## Recipe Corner: Thai Iced Tea (*Chai yen*)

### Ingredients:

6 cups water  
1 cup Thai tea (one possible source here: <http://www.sribhud.com/>)  
3/4 cup sugar  
6 tablespoons cream  
6 tablespoons condensed milk

### Directions:

In a kettle, bring the water to a boil. Place the tea in a teapot or glass container. Pour the water over the tea and let steep until bright orange in color, 3 to 5 minutes. Strain into a clean container, such as a pitcher (or, if in tea bags, remove the bags). Add sugar and stir to dissolve. Let

cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Fill 6 tall glasses with crushed ice and add tea to 3/4 full. Add 1 tablespoon cream and 1 tablespoon condensed milk to each glass.

Serve with iced-tea spoon so guests can swirl the mixture themselves.

Recipe credit: Emeril Lagasse (<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/emiril-lagasse/thai-iced-tea-recipe/index.html>)



Photo credit: flickr "tea..." by Chris Blakeley