



Welcoming the Stranger

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- An amazing client – Gahigi!
- Great summer reading ideas!
- Focus on: Refugee Cash Assistance

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New Website!

Have you checked out the new Minnesota Council of Churches website? Filled with information about our members, programs, and volunteer opportunities, the new website offers a terrific way to learn more about the work of MCC and Refugee Services!

Check it out at www.mnchurches.org/refugeeservices.

Did you know?

Refugee Services has resettled 182 refugees so far this year!



Mayflower House

Have you heard about Mayflower House?

Thanks to a partnership between Mayflower Church in South Minneapolis and Refugee Services, a former parsonage is now serving as a first home for many of the refugees resettled through MCC!

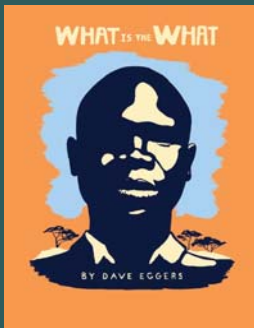
Mayflower House, located near Mayflower Church, is a single family home furnished entirely with donations

from church members and Refugee Services. For a low monthly rent, refugee families who have trouble finding housing can live in Mayflower House for a few months as they get on their feet in Minnesota.

Mayflower Church also allows Refugee Services to store extra furniture for refugees in the garage at the back of the house, expanding our storage capacity and

helping to ensure that we will be able to give furniture to as many families as possible!

Thanks to Mayflower Church and Anna Plumb – who coordinated the reopening of Mayflower House for Refugee Services – for helping provide such a welcoming first home for refugees in Minneapolis!



What is the What
by Dave Eggers.

Read About Refugees!

What is the What by
Dave Eggers.

A powerful story based on the life of Valentino Achak Deng, a former Lost Boy from Sudan, and the numerous challenges he faced both in Africa and the United States.

*The Spirit Catches You
and You Fall Down* by
Ann Fadiman.

The fascinating true story of a Hmong refugee family's encounter with the United States healthcare system. This book provides insight into many facets of Hmong history and culture, as well as American values. A must read!

Letters From Burma by
Aung San Suu Kyi.

This is a collection of 52 essays that Aung San Suu Kyi had written in the mid 1990's for a Japanese newspaper. She discusses a full range of topics including politics, religion, and the daily life of the Burmese people as seen through the eyes of the country's biggest champion

Join us for the CROP Hunger Walk!

When: October 12, 2pm

Where: Starting and ending at Augsburg College in Minneapolis

Contact: Kristin Zoellner at kristin.zoellner@mchurches.org

What: CROP is an annual walkathon to raise funds for Church World Service's relief efforts around the world and local poverty-fighting organizations. A portion of this year's funds will go towards Refugee Services at MCC. Even if you can't join us on the walk day, please consider being a "Spirit Walker"— you can still raise funds online to show your support.

Program Focus: Refugee Cash Assistance

Refugee Cash Assistance is a Federal welfare program specifically for refugees who don't qualify for regular family assistance, such as those who are single or married with no dependents. Last year alone, Refugee Services administered the program to 154 cases!

The primary benefit of RCA is the financial support offered for up to 8 months after clients arrive in the U.S. The program also pairs clients with a job counselor to work towards self-sufficiency. Each

counselor assists them with resume creation, job applications and interview coaching.

RCA participants are also eligible for Food Support and Health Care Assistance from the Government. As the Refugee Services RCA Coordinator, Anna Plumb has access to clients' benefits, and often uses this information to help our clients navigate the system and ensure that our clients are getting the proper benefits. The Refugee Cash Assistance

program is administered at resettlement offices through a public-private partnership between the Department of Human Services and Refugee Resettlement Agencies. RCA was formerly coordinated through county government offices, but has seen significant strides since moving to local resettlement agencies. The Wilder Institute performed a project analyzing this program and honored it as a "Promising Practice."

To learn more about this program at Refugee Services, contact RCA Eligibility Coordinator Plumb at (612) 230-3218 or via e-mail at

Anna.Plumb@MNChurches.org.



Anna Plumb, Refugee
Cash Assistance
(RCA) Coordinator,
explaining RCA to
newly arrived
refugees at MCC.

Be A Donation Driver!



If you love volunteering, meeting new people, and getting a little exercise all at once, the Donation Driver volunteer position at Refugee Services is tailor-made for you!

Refugee Services often receives donations of furniture from individuals around the metro area. Often, these great donors are able to drop off their donated furniture directly with a refugee family.

However, there is also a great need for volunteer drivers who can pick up furniture from donors and drop it off with families around the Twin Cities.

Donation drivers get to be a part of the whole donation process – from meeting donors

to dropping off their gently used furniture with refugee families! Volunteers in this position will have the chance to interact with a wide variety of people, and their service will help ensure that the newest Minnesotans are able to receive furniture that can help them build their first homes in Minnesota.

Donation drivers should be friendly and comfortable communicating with people who might have limited English skills. They will need to have their own vehicle large enough to haul furniture, as well as the ability to keep a fairly regular schedule (for example, a volunteer in this position might sign up to work twice a month for two hours at a time). Donation drivers will also need to pass a background and driving records check, have appropriate insurance, and be able to safely lift heavy objects.

If being a donation driver sounds like your cup of tea, just contact the Refugee Services Resources Coordinator, Kristin Zoellner, at (612) 230-3219 or kristin.zoellner@mnchurches.org!

Client Story: Gahigi

Gahigi and his family lived in Rwanda. Due to the horrific genocide that was taking place there in the 1990s, their family was forced to flee to India for safety. Once they arrived, Gahigi pursued his education with dedication, received his undergraduate degree and was able to start teaching French courses. However, he and his family were struggling financially because he wasn't paid enough to cover their living expenses. After spending five years in India, the family received priority one refugee status from the U.S. Embassy and was given the chance to come to Minnesota.

They arrived in Minneapolis in the winter of 2004 and received orientation from Lutheran Social Services. Due to a sincere need to provide for his family, Gahigi was very determined to get a job and start establishing himself in a career. After some time of searching, he began to feel very anxious about not working yet. Little did he know that a chance meeting would soon change his life.

Gahigi happened to meet someone at a bus stop one day and began to discuss

the frustrations he had concerning his employment search. The new acquaintance quickly provided the contact information for Mike Z., an employment counselor at Refugee Services. The new friend provided the phone number and stated simply, "this is a man that helps people." Gahigi immediately called him and began a period of phone tag, each one calling the other without success. After they finally connected, Mike decided that he would meet Gahigi at his house because he simply had no means of transportation to MCC. Immediately, the two began working on Gahigi's resume, interview skills and even accent modification!

After a few months, many meetings and countless job applications, Gahigi received an exciting phone call. He had a job interview at Fairview Medical Center! He went to the interview and found out quickly that he had gotten the job. This good news was a relief to the family, but the position he took was listed as temporary. Over the following

months, though, both Mike and Gahigi pushed hard for him to receive a full-time position. In the end, all of the effort paid off for Gahigi, and due to his consistent work ethic, he was offered a job at Fairview. His new placement insured not only that he had money to care for his family, but also a place to work for a long time to come.

After working for two years at Fairview, Gahigi is very happy. He recently said that "I have a good job, I like it here." Additionally, he and his wife are the proud parents of five children. Even with this very busy household, the two of them aren't held back from pursuing higher education. Gahigi's wife is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree part-time while also working for a college in the Twin Cities. Gahigi still plans to go for a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management or Social Work, but is content with his position at this stage in life. When commenting about the services from MCC, he said that his counselor did a "wonderful job and it is very much appreciated."



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Refugee Services

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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.

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.

Volunteers and donations are always needed! Your help can make a huge difference in the lives of the newest Minnesotans.

Current needs include: New or gently used winter coats • New or gently used sheets • House-Keeping Kits: wastebasket filled with dish soap, laundry detergent, all purpose cleaner, sponges, trash bags, and a small dustpan/broom set
Contact Kristin.Zoellner@mnchurches.org to volunteer or donate items.

Refugee Services' Recipe Corner

For dinner tonight, why not try a delicious Somali recipe? The Twin Cities has the largest Somali population outside of Somalia.

Sambusas

- 1 (14 ounce) package spring roll wrappers
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 2 pounds ground beef
 - 1 leek, chopped
 - 2 teaspoons ground cumin
 - 2 teaspoons ground cardamom
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 1 teaspoon pepper
 - 1 small onion, finely chopped
 - 1 clove garlic, minced
 - 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
 - 1 tablespoon water, or as needed
- 1 quart oil for frying

Directions:

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions, leek and garlic, and cook, stirring until the onions are transparent. Add ground beef, and cook until about halfway done. Season with cumin, cardamom, salt and pepper. Mix well, and continue cooking until beef has browned.

In a small dish or cup, mix together the flour and water to make a thin paste. Using one wrapper at a time, fold into the shape of a cone. Fill the cone with the meat mixture, close the top, and seal with the paste. Repeat until wraps or filling are used up.

Heat the oil to 365 degrees F in a deep-fryer or deep, heavy pot.

There should be enough oil to submerge the wraps. Fry the sambusa a few at a time until golden brown. Remove carefully to drain on paper towels.

Recipe taken from: <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Sambusa/Detail.aspx>

