



Welcoming the Stranger

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Refugee Services partners with CROP Walk
- The latest on refugee admissions to the United States
- Focus on: Computer Lab and Jeannette DeSouza

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Welcome Back!

We would like to officially welcome you to the Minnesota Council of Churches' Refugee Services newsletter! In new issue, you will find lots of great info on what's

happening in the world of refugee resettlement in Minnesota, plus volunteer opportunities, program profiles, and even recipes!

Did you know?

In October, volunteers from Centennial United Methodist Church helped 9 refugee kids pick out shoes and socks at the annual Shoe Spree in St. Paul!



MCC Partners in Minneapolis CROP Walk

This fall, Refugee Services established a new partnership with Church World Service and assisted with the 2007 Minneapolis CROP Walk. CROP stand for Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty, and these fundraising events take place all across the U.S. each year.

The money donated at each walk goes to Church World Service to help fight poverty around the world. After it's collected, 75% of the money donated goes directly to Church World Service, and 25% is distributed to local organizations that are active in the fight against poverty. This

year, Refugee Services was chosen as a recipient of the Minneapolis funds!

Refugee Services partnered with CROP organizers by helping with the distribution of materials, assisting with volunteers for the event and recruiting churches to participate. Refugee Services also gathered a team that was one of the top fundraising groups at the walk!

In the end, the 2007 Minneapolis CROP Walk was a huge success! Despite rainy weather, over 100 walkers braved the elements in order to show support

of those in poverty. The event received over \$14,000 in contributions, a large increase from the previous year's walk! Refugee Services is honored to be one of the organizations benefitting from those funds, and is looking forward to continuing the partnership with the CWS CROP Walk in the future.



2007 Report to Congress Overview



Immigration Outreach Specialist Anu Sreekanth helps families apply for Green Cards.

Early September saw the release of “Proposed Refugee Admission for Fiscal Year 2008: Report to the Congress.” This very important document, published annually, sets the ceilings for the admission of refugees to the United States for the next fiscal year (the fiscal year for the resettlement community runs from October 1st to September 30th).

For fiscal year 2008, the government has set the ceiling for refugees entering the United States at 80,000. Although the ceiling may sound high, it’s highly unlikely that 80,000 refugees will be admitted to the United States over the next fiscal year. For FY07, 48,281 refugees were admitted, out of a ceiling of 70,000. In the Twin Cities, there were approximately 3,100 refugees resettled in

FY07. The Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services program resettled 354 people during that fiscal year.

The biggest changes from last year’s ceilings to this year’s are found in the regions of Africa, East Asia, and Near East/South Asia. In Africa, the ceiling has dropped from 22,000 refugees to 16,000. In East Asia, the ceiling has risen from 11,000 refugees to 20,000. The largest change is found in the Near East/South Asia region, whose ceiling has jumped from 5,500 to 28,000. This can be mainly attributed to the U.S. government’s stated desire to begin serious resettlement of Iraqi refugees over the next fiscal year.

Many in MN won-

der if our state will be a major area of resettlement for Iraqi refugees. In fact, MN is one of only two states in the country that only resettles “family reunification” cases, meaning that anyone who is resettled in our state already has family members here who have filed for them to come. Because MN does not have a large Iraqi population, it is unlikely that we will receive many Iraqi refugees, though Iraqi refugees may end up traveling to MN after being resettled in other states.

The United States has the largest resettlement program in the world, and MN consistently ranks as the second or third largest state for refugee resettlement in the country.

Program Focus: Computer Lab

Refugee Services offers computer training for new arrivals and asylees in the Minnesota Church Center. The program started in spring 2006 through Wells Fargo grant. Class instruction began later that fall.

The lab offers both basic and intermediate computing courses. The one-month basic computing skills course meets twice each week. It addresses all the essentials of using a computer, from turning it on and using the

mouse to searching the internet for information. The lab’s one-month intermediate computing class meets three times a week, and includes more instruction on Microsoft Word, Excel and accessing job applications on the internet.

The computer lab holds weekly assessments to enroll clients into these two classes. Each group then receives instruction from qualified volunteers or interns that partner with Refugee Services.

This resource at MCC has trained dozens of refugees and asylees since its creation! After finishing their classes, those enrolled are encouraged to continue using the lab when they have free time.

Many have found the computer lab to be a tremendous opportunity to learn skills that will help them become more self-sufficient in the future. To learn more about this program at Refugee Services, contact Employment Resource Developer Becky Burand at (612) 230-3221 or via e-mail at

becky.burand@mchurches.org.



Volunteer Opportunity! Be a Bus Buddy!



Refugee Services has lots of great ways to get involved as a volunteer, and one of these ways will be highlighted in each issue of our newsletter!

This issue's highlighted opportunity is our **Bus Buddy** position. For our refugee clients, one of the most important steps towards self-sufficiency is learning how to

use the public transportation system. Knowing how to confidently ride the bus helps people secure employment, meet appointments, and do important errands. Refugees who attend extended orientation classes at Refugee Services practice riding the bus with Refugee Services staff, but some people aren't able to attend, or need a little extra help to cement their new skills.

Bus Buddies are men and women with a solid working knowledge of the Metro Transit system who are willing to devote a few hours to helping a newly arrived refugee learn how to use public transportation. Bus Buddies will

meet with their refugee partner to plan routes to important stops - jobs, errands, appointments. Then the partners will practice riding the bus together, making sure that refugees understand bus riding basics like transfers, schedules, and bus etiquette.

Being a Bus Buddy is a great way to participate in direct service, help refugees learn crucial skills, and have fun! It's not a big time commitment, and the rewards are huge. If you are interested in learning more about the Bus Buddy position, or the other volunteer positions available at Refugee Services, just call or email Caitlin Shaw, the Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, at (612) 230-3219 or caitlin.shaw@mchurches.org.

We would LOVE to have you join us in service to refugees!



Client Story: Jeannette DeSouza

Jeannette came to Minnesota to visit her brother during the spring of 2004. She had fled from Togo, a country known for being ruled by a corrupt dictator. Once she arrived in the United States, she filed for asylum because living in Togo was dangerous. Her family at home opposed the current oppressive government and was harassed by many people around them.

After receiving asylum, Jeannette applied for her husband, parents and children to come to Minnesota. She also began searching for employment. Jeannette soon discovered that it would take some effort to find a job that she wanted, but through a referral from her brother, she gave a call to Refugee Services for help. She spoke to Employment Counselor Mike Zaslofsky and the two began creating a

resume, practicing interview techniques and discussing what the working world is like in the United States.

Jeannette was also in need of clothing. Due to her entrance into the United States as a visitor, she wasn't prepared for life in Minnesota. Mike helped fulfill those needs by taking her to Vine and Branches, a nearby clothing store. This was a helpful step in helping Jeannette feel more comfortable in Minnesota.

She started applying for positions, and it did not take long before she was noticed. Only a few weeks after she and Mike began working together, they found a position opening in nutrition services at Fairview Medical Center. Soon after, Jeannette was granted an interview. She did so well at that meeting that she was offered the position and started work immediately!

Additional good news came when her husband and two children were cleared

to come to the U.S. After they arrived, her husband was able to find work at a hotel in downtown Minneapolis and their two young children began elementary school. Next year, Jeannette's husband will go to school to become a pharmacy technician.

Recently, Jeannette received training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant and left Nutrition Services to follow this new career. She's very excited about being a CNA in the surgery department and plans to pursue further training to become a surgical technician in the coming months!

Jeannette is still concerned for Togo because "things are still getting worse," but she's very grateful to have a job she loves and much of her family here in Minnesota.



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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.

Refugee Services' Recipe Corner

For dinner tonight, why not try a delicious Burmese recipe? In the last resettlement year, Refugee Services resettled more people from the Thai-Burma border than from any other region in the world.

Beef Curry (A Mae Nhut)

1.8 pounds beef
5.7 ounces oil
2 tablespoons vinegar
8 green chilies
2 inches ginger root
5 onions
2 cloves garlic
Pinch salt
4 bay leaves
3 cinnamon sticks
5 cloves
4 pepper seeds

Directions:

- 1) Cut beef into large pieces (about 2 inches square).
- 2) Pound chili, onion, garlic, and ginger into a paste.
- 3) Mix the paste and salt well into the beef and start cooking on low heat.
- 4) When water evaporates, taste to see if the curry needs more salt or not.
- 5) Add a bit of water and cook some more. When water evaporates, see if the beef is tender or not. If not, add more water and cook further.
- 6) When beef is tender, add bay leaves, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and pepper,

and continue cooking until oil has welled up to the surface.

- 7) Serve and enjoy!



Recipe taken from: <http://www.nagani.com/food/recipes/dishes/beefcurry/>