

# CONNECT

World Relief Minnesota is Now



Serving Refugee & Immigrant Neighbors Together

A Newsletter for Arrive Ministries | September 2014



## 51.2 MILLION

The number of refugees worldwide has reached historic levels not seen since the end of World War II. A recent United Nations report indicates that more than 51.2 million people around the world are displaced. Nearly 17 million are refugees and more than one-half are children.

Some 32,000 people are forcibly displaced from their homes daily, most escaping war, persecution, ethnic cleansing and countless human rights violations. Antonio Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), says that the situation in places like Syria, Iraq, Congo and Somalia is "the most catastrophic humanitarian situation we face at the present moment" and the swelling numbers of dislocated people "is the crime of our times."

This crisis is hitting home in Minnesota with new refugees arriving daily and also at U.S. border states where unaccompanied children have arrived by the thousands. Already estimated at nearly 60,000 this year, these unaccompanied minors are fleeing places like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador because of widespread violence, threats and extortion. This number is expected to mushroom to some 90,000.

## World Relief Minnesota is Now Arrive Ministries

We have become Arrive Ministries to reflect who we are as we serve the many refugees, immigrants and asylees who arrive and now call Minnesota home. Our name has changed, our organization has not. Arrive Ministries continues our long partnership with World Relief Corporation (Baltimore, MD) in its worldwide community development efforts.

## More than 300 refugees arrive with stories of fear and of hope



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Each refugee family, each displaced child, each woman who has fled with her children, has a story. Since January, Arrive Ministries has resettled more than 300 refugees. These refugees have arrived from places such as Northern Iraq and Sri Lanka and have witnessed the genocide of their people and experienced the terror of their countries being torn apart by ethnic and religious hatred.

We at Arrive Ministries have heard the story of how one of "our families" fled to Malaysia for safety and lived for eight years as refugees. We have been shown pictures of their house burned to the ground, parents and grandparents murdered, and bodies dumped by the side of the road or into mass graves.

As we reflect on what we hear and see, we declare, "Surely the blood cries out to God from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). But such stories spur us on to bring redemption and love to those who God has brought to us as our new neighbors and friends.

Many Blessings,  
Bob Oehrig, Executive Director

We recently received this email from an African Christian whose husband was murdered by extremists: "I just want to say thank you to America and its people for being example of right and justice to the world. Thank you for encouraging the church to love and welcome foreigners in the face of terrorism. You put Christ's interest before yours. May Christ bless and favor your nation and its people. Keep the Christian faith and value high and let the flame burn brighter in the midst of darkness until a better day for our world. God bless you!"

Arrive Ministries is an affiliate of Transform Minnesota, an evangelical network of churches from across the state. For information about Arrive Ministries and the important work we do in Minnesota, visit [arriveministries.org](http://arriveministries.org) or contact us: [info@arriveministries.org](mailto:info@arriveministries.org), 612.798.4332.

Continuing to partner with World Relief (U.S.) to transform lives

[arriveministries.org](http://arriveministries.org)



One of my privileges as Executive Director of Arrive Ministries is to hear and experience powerful stories of God's grace in the lives of refugees.

I would like to tell you Zatta's story. Zatta (not his real name), his wife and four children

(all under the age of 5), lived with my family for three weeks this summer while we looked for affordable housing to help them start new lives in Minnesota.

The family members are Kurds (from Northern Iraq) whose ethnic and religious minority community has been the target of persecution and genocide. For many months the family needed to weigh the decision to leave their country, community and home, before finally arriving in Minneapolis in June.

In the short weeks they lived with my family, we shared our lives, our stories, our ethnic dishes (such as pizza and biriyani) as we also followed the news and viewed horrific pictures of massacres which had taken place in Kurdistan since Zatta's family departed

Zatta had been a translator for the U.S. military in Iraq and while he is now safe in Minnesota, he anguishes for the rest of his family and his larger community who have been brutalized. Zatta says his family came to the U.S. with “a very big

hope in life” – to start fresh and “raise our children in a peaceful environment.” His dream is to go back to school for a Masters Degree in international leadership, and be a change agent for good.

In the U.S., with the help of Arrive Ministries and a local church Refugee Life Ministries team, Zatta finally feels he can truly hope for the future even as he advocates for his people back in Kurdistan. He explains how he has found “real freedom” and “real friends” and now is eager to settle down and work hard for his family and his community here and back home.

Every year, because of your partnership, Arrive Ministries' staff and volunteers help thousands of refugees – victims of war and persecution – replant their lives in the United States. We come alongside America's newcomers, helping them adjust to the culture, find employment, learn English, take steps towards citizenship and build a future for themselves and their children.

Today, Zatta's identity is more than “a displaced person.” He is now someone with a “very big hope.” Thank you for helping families from Kurdistan, Burma, Ethiopia, Somali and a dozen other countries find hope and new beginnings as we love them, with open arms, the way Jesus loves them.



Photos accompanying this article are used with permission. © UN High Commissioner for Refugees

## Donna's Experience

*As prayers go, it wasn't much: a couple of sentences dedicate our newly-remodeled kitchen and dining room. I was trying to overcome disappointment that we didn't have enough funds to make the space larger. But, here it was with new everything, and we were asking God to help us use it for his glory. It felt like a silly prayer to me: how could such a small place be used for much, especially God's glory?*

*A week later, Bob came home from his job of resettling refugees, with a big problem: a huge influx of refugees and he and his staff could not find affordable housing for a family of 6 arriving from Iraq. When he told me the ages of the children, I said they were small enough bodies that the entire family could occupy our two upstairs bedrooms. We expanded our table with its one leaf and later that night opened the door to a travel-weary family with four small children.*

*Only the father, E\*, could speak English. Nonetheless, I showed Z\* my pots and pans. I took her to the bathroom and showed her how to work the shower/tub faucet. I opened my fridge and pantry and told her she could help herself to whatever she needed to fix her family their meals while we were at work. E\* followed behind, translating as fast as he could. Z\*'s large, brown eyes sparkled with intelligence and purpose. Each time she understood what I was communicating to her, she would give a sharp nod and say, “OK!” And she never forgot.*

*Unfortunately for the family, my larder was woefully inadequate for Kurdish tastes. Soon the kitchen was filled with bags of rice, vegetables, flat breads, and spices I had no idea existed.*

*One day, Z\* pulled me down to the floor in the kitchen, and with her 3-year-old daughter, showed me how to wrap grape leaves around a meat-rice-eggplant-and other stuff combo, placing them carefully in my largest pot, to be steamed for dinner. One day Z\* took my hand and brought me to the couch where E\* and the kids were enjoying Skype conversations with family back home. There, she introduced me to her mother. One day Z\* produced a CD and we watched the wedding ceremony of her only brother that had taken place just before they left home. She showed me her own wedding album, and she showed me pictures of her sisters – all 13 of them, and called them each by name, insisting I say each name back to her. Then one day, E\* and Z\* showed us pictures from news agencies back home of atrocities being committed against their people group in towns not far from where their own family and friends live.*

*And on that day, something irrevocably shifted in my world. What happened to Mom or brother and his new wife, or the sisters and their kids suddenly, urgently mattered to me. What did NOT matter – at all – was the kitchen and table that I had thought too small to be of service. For on that day, E\* and Z\* had pulled back the curtains and had ushered me to the hallowed ground of their suffering.*





Calvary Church Team with their Karen family



Northwood Church continuing their ministry.



350 backpacks from Eagle Brook Church and Union Gospel Mission

## Arrive Ministries – Summer Highlights

You are Welcome Here!

Did you know that a refugee in Thailand is not allowed to be more than 300 meters away from the refugee camp? If they are caught by the Thai police they risk deportation to their home country. Imagine living in the camp for 10-20 years – never able to leave, never welcomed. One Karen refugee family coming out of Thailand experienced the complete opposite response when they arrived in July. They were welcomed. They were met at the airport by their family, their case manager, and 17 RLM team members, almost all of them dressed in Karen clothing. Over the course of the following weeks the team helped the family move into their new apartment, regularly visited, and brought them to their different appointments. As they spent time with the family, they showed, without words: “You are welcome here.”

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Thank you [Eagle Brook Church](#) and [Union Gospel Mission](#) for making 350 backpacks available for Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT) to distribute at 14 Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT) program sites in the Twin Cities to Somali children.

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Great news from Godwin Saporu and the [Grace Fellowship](#) congregation announcing their decision to welcome another refugee family:

*“At our meeting last Thursday, about eight of us resolved to form another group that will make a difference in showing radical love to a new refugee family. Yes, we will give up some comfort, give up some valuable time, give up some cultural familiarity, spend a little more money, and perhaps do much more. But in return, God will be blowing our minds with an outreach that is so close to his heart and that opens us to more of his power and grace and love than we have ever known! I am so excited about this opportunity and I thank God for moving in your hearts so passionately to respond to this need.”*

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The refugee family [Northwood Church](#) was matched with recently moved away from the cities; however, they continue to shower them with love and blessings! Thank you Northwood for being the hands and feet of Jesus!

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[Calvary Church - Calvary Impact](#), recently welcomed a Karen family! At the airport, the family's faces lit up when the team said, “We are so happy you are here!” Be praying that the Lord would bless this family as they make Minnesota their new home and that Christ's love would be made known through the Calvary RLM team! Additionally, the team from [CrossPoint Church](#) welcomed a Somali family; the team from [Wooddale Church](#) opened their arms to a Cuban family; and the [Bethlehem Baptist](#) team was matched with a new Karen family.



Grace Fellowship enjoying time with their refugee family.



Bethlehem Baptist North RLM Team welcoming a new Karen family.

*“If we are to be credible witnesses of the Gospel, we must understand that it's not ‘nice’ for us to engage people across racial, ethnic, gender, sociopolitical and cultural lines - it's necessary.”*

*– A Credible Witness, by Brenda Salter McNeil*

## Employment Story

By Anya Yastremski, Employment Counselor



*"A month later, I received a call from an HR generalist at Crown Plaza Hotel thanking me for sending a great worker to her hotel. She told me how absolutely grateful she was for Ja."*

Employment counseling and job coaching are vital parts of the refugee resettlement process. I teach newly arrived refugees and asylees about American work ethics, the importance of mastering English, and encourage them as they become independent and self-sufficient individuals in the US.

In early summer, I began working with a Burmese Kachin refugee woman named Ja. I was excited that we could enroll her in our employment program and that we would be able to serve a representative from an ethnic group we had not worked with previously. At the time, I knew the Kachin are an ethnic minority group that lives in Northern Burma, but I had never personally met anyone from that part of the world.

Ja had graduated high school, spoke wonderful English, and had a lot of work experience from the time she fled Burma for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. When I asked her, "What would be your ideal job?" She immediately responded, "I would love to be a housekeeper at a hotel. Any hotel." I was excited to see her determination and that she already had a goal in mind. If I were in her situation, I don't know that I could be that brave. I knew from her first appointment with me that she was ready for success.

After her initial intake, we put her resume together and began the job search. We applied for a position at Crowne Plaza Hotel and Ja received a phone call inviting her to come for an interview. She was hired for the full-time position immediately! A month later, I received a call from an HR generalist at Crown Plaza Hotel thanking me for sending a great worker to her hotel. She told me how absolutely grateful she was for Ja. It warmed my heart that Ja had only been working there for four weeks and had already gained a wonderful reputation.

At the beginning of July, Ja stopped by my office to let me know that she had been given new responsibilities at the hotel and was now training new hires. I could not have been prouder; Ja's hard work and enthusiasm allowed her to shine at her work place. Soon after she stopped in, I received an email from Ja's manager that simply said, "Ja is sensational. We want to clone her." Stories like Ja's are why I love my job and why I am so passionate about helping new immigrants find suitable employment.



*"I was challenged to care for her as God loves us, without expectation of return. I have done so little, how much more has God has done for us!"*

## Seeing Families United – Immigration Legal Services

By Christine Burton, Director of Immigration Legal Services

One of the best things about working in immigration is having the privilege to see families reunited.

Often when people write stories they share about people they loved working with. However, the client that has really been on my heart recently is one that was not the easiest. In 2010 a woman came to our office asking for help to bring her husband to the United States. In 1994, she had been forced to flee from her home country of Rwanda to a refugee camp in Congo where she got married and began a life with her husband. However, war broke out in Congo as well and one day she was forced to flee by herself through the jungle to Tanzania; all while she was pregnant. Eventually she was resettled to the United States, thinking that her husband had died. However, her husband had in fact survived and eventually was able to get reconnected through a relative, many years after they had been separated. Needless to say, she was anxious to reunite with her husband so she came to Arrive Ministries for Immigration Legal Services help.

This is clearly the kind of client we are here to help so why do I say it was difficult? For most of the time I worked with her, I didn't know her full story and what she had been through, so she seemed like a demanding, upset, emotional client who refused to understand boundaries for no good reason.

The fact that her case was delayed due to various processing issues outside of our control didn't help either. Typically a case such as hers should take one to two years; it took four years for her husband to finally arrive this year.

Despite all the difficulties, this case is probably one of our greatest success stories. You can't always represent "perfect" clients who respond well to tough situations. Difficult people need help just as much as the friendly, smiling client who says please and thank you. Representing her was a lesson in patience, understanding and love. As I learned more about her and what she went through, it showed me a great example of how God takes care of each one of us no matter who we are and how we respond. Her story is hard, her case hit snags, but God has been with her through it all. I was challenged to care for her as God loves us, without expectation of return. I have done so little, how much more has God has done for us!

The refugees and immigrants we serve at Arrive Ministries are those who have been through untold miseries and trauma that you and I could never imagine. Seeing my client with her husband finally beside her, smiling and calm was a reward far greater than I could ask. What a joy to know that you, as supporters of our work, have been a part of the healing process for this woman and her husband.



## Crisis at U.S. border highlights world-wide need for assistance

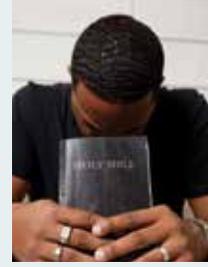
As we have all been hearing, there are nearly 60,000 Unaccompanied Minors who have been apprehended at the U.S. border this year. These children (like those pictured) have come primarily from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, escaping unrest, gang violence, poverty and the turmoil often associated with the drug trade.

On top of this burgeoning humanitarian crisis at our border, there are also 17 million refugees (like the Sri Lankan refugees pictured) and a total of 51.2 million displaced people around the world who are looking for safety and new beginnings.

While we must pray for all people caught in these situations, we are calling on friends and supporters of Arrive Ministries to pray for our government officials who have difficult decisions to make. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is responsible for caring for and processing the children at our borders, has recently reallocated \$94 million away from existing Refugee Resettlement programs and support of activities in states like Minnesota which help to integrate and resettle refugees who will be arriving shortly or have recently arrived in our communities.

Congress has been unable to agree on the way to address the crisis at our border. Decisions for additional humanitarian funding for ORR to process refugee children already here, for action in the countries of origin to stem the flow of new unaccompanied minors, and for increased border security are still in flux. While there are no simple solutions, we as Christians need to pray for all dislocated people who have fled horrendous situations worldwide.

Thank you for praying and for your ongoing partnership in addressing the needs of vulnerable refugees and children. May God bless you as together we bless those God has entrusted to His Church.



## Urgent Need for Prayer

- for wisdom for our elected officials as they address the issues at our border and allocate funding for both the humanitarian needs of unaccompanied minors and the ongoing resettlement of overseas refugees who are already here or in the pipeline to come to Minnesota.
- for fair treatment and due process for frightened and desperate children already in custody who have risked a perilous journey across Mexico to the United States in hope of freedom and a life without violence and fear.
- for church and non-profit groups who are reaching out to care for the unaccompanied children, many who are currently warehoused in overcrowded conditions.
- for organizations like Arrive Ministries which are resettling hundreds of “traditional” new refugees each year in partnership with Refugee Life Ministries (RLM) church teams, as well as serving 2000+ other refugees through ESL and Somali Adult Literacy Training, church refugee gardens, Immigration Legal Services, Refugee Employment Services and Refugee Social Services.



## Evangelical churches collaborating to demonstrate the Gospel to Somali immigrants

One thing that attracted the Rev. Aaron Brockmeier to Faribault from Denver was the rural town’s diversity. On a visit to the 23,000-person town in southeast Minnesota, he noticed that the Saint Luke’s Church parking lot was filled with “kids from the nations.” Coming from Denver’s inner city, Brockmeier and his wife immediately were enticed to continue their ministry in Faribault.

Upon accepting the call to Saint Luke’s, Brockmeier began to work on ways his church could reach out to the city’s Somali population. He called Mike Neterer, program director for Arrive Ministry’s SALT program, (Somali Adult Literacy Training) and asked how he could develop an outreach ministry. “It was a very slow process,” Brockmeier recalled. “Getting our church ready, getting myself ready, kind of learning.”

Things came to a head in 2013 when Brockmeier and members of his church attended a banquet hosted by Cru, formerly Here’s Life Inner City. Neterer spoke at the event, and a number of people from Brockmeier’s church expressed the need to get SALT in Faribault. “That was the last push that I needed,” he said.

Before Neterer had a chance to visit, however, Brockmeier had two Somali leaders visit him in his church office. They had heard of the church’s after-school program and asked him, “Would you help us teach English to our people?”

Brockmeier threw out the idea to other churches in the city – asking them if they would be interested in learning how to reach out to the Somali people, as well. Last November, some 15 to 18 leaders and pastors attended a meeting at Saint Luke’s with Neterer and Sherry Mohamed, director of Arrive Ministries’ RAJO program. The group talked and prayed about ways to reach out and demonstrate the love of Jesus. The Faribault team also attended a RAJO Somali cultural training in April and as a result, this past spring SALT Faribault was launched.

“We have the blessing of pretty much all the evangelical churches,” Brockmeier said of the support they receive from area churches. In addition to Saint Luke’s, the collaboration includes Bethel Ridge Church of the Lutheran Brethren, River Valley Church – Faribault Campus and The River Church.



Subsidiary of Transform Minnesota

1515 E. 66<sup>th</sup> Street  
Richfield, MN 55423

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Personal hygiene kits made by an Arrive Ministries volunteer for arriving refugees

### Somali Adult Literacy Team Update

Headlines about Islamist activities in Iraq and around the world are truly disturbing. Perhaps, like me, you feel tempted to fear. However, *“God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”* (2 Timothy 1:7)

Thank God for the courage he gives us knowing he will work out history, through us, his disciples, for his kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as we make disciple and share Jesus with our Somali neighbors through literacy and friendship.

We are grateful for recent growth including:

- Summer sports outreach in Eden Prairie
- Expansion of outreach in Burnsville
- Launching of a new SALT site in Faribault
- Prayer and outreach training in Omaha, Nebraska

Recently we received requests for help from leaders in Maine, Ohio, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and the United Kingdom. Moreover, SALT is also reaching Africa, to some of the least-reached, previously un-engaged tribes in Somalia. Three of these groups were, until recently, listed as “un-contacted!”

Not long ago, the leader of one group called from Somalia to arrange meetings with Christian leaders to invite them to send workers into a region recently liberated from Al Qaeda terrorists. We believe workers will soon enter this region that has had, until now, zero Christians, zero Scripture in the local languages, and zero long-term witness.

### What can you do to help?

There are many practical ways you can take action, demonstrate God’s love, and help transform the lives of refugees who have suffered much loss and dislocation. Please consider one or more of the following:

1) **WELCOME KITS:** Refugees must establish their households in Minnesota after arriving with few belongings and extremely limited resources. Churches, small groups and individuals bless new arrivals when they assist with basic household goods, furniture and other necessities. Experience the joy of being the “hands and feet of Jesus” as you welcome a family.

2) **MEET WITH A REFUGEE FAMILY:** Our immigrant neighbors need people to help them understand our culture and navigate our systems. There are opportunities to invest in the lives of refugees. Arrive Ministries provides training and support for all volunteers.

3) **GIVE FINANCIALLY TO ARRIVE MINISTRIES:** Your generous gift helps us to increase our outreach to those coming to our communities with new hope and new dreams as they flee hardship, persecution and fear.

4) **ADVOCACY:** People with a passion for refugee and immigrant issues can become advocates within their churches and communities by facilitating educational opportunities, recruiting volunteers, and speaking on behalf of immigrants and refugees with local organizations and policymakers.

Thank you for joining with us and for not turning your back on the millions of displaced people who are looking to us to take action on their behalf. **TO GET INVOLVED:** [arriveministries.org/how-you-can-help](http://arriveministries.org/how-you-can-help)