

Refugee Life Ministries: A Match Made in Heaven

THE REFUGEE LIFE MINISTRIES (RLM) TEAM FROM NORTH HEIGHTS LUTHERAN CHURCH WAS EXCITED TO BE connected with their refugee family. They had just finished their training on the resettlement process when they were notified that a Karen family would be arriving from a refugee camp in Thailand in less than two weeks. Even though it would be difficult to get ready in time – they still had to collect and deliver an entire apartment's worth of household and furniture items – they decided to "go for it".

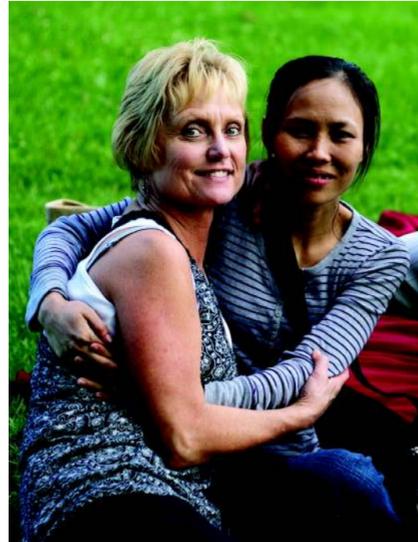
The team energetically stepped up to the challenge. They arranged who would haul the furniture, who would help unload items, and who would set up the apartment. Then all of a sudden, the day when the family was scheduled to depart, World Relief was notified that the flight had been cancelled because of illness.

Now the team must wait for the family to be rescheduled, and no one knows how long it will take. But they are willing to wait – this is their family, for whom they have prepared a special place in their community and lives. In the meantime, team members have decided to volunteer at their church's clothing closet, which serves many new arrivals. This is the story of refugee resettlement – the unexpected is bound to happen. What an encouragement it is when teams respond patiently and with flexibility when such things happen!

Currently, 14 churches are working with new refugee families while many other teams continue to meet with some of the 45 refugee families (and 258 individuals) who have been matched with area churches. Recently, World Relief Minnesota organized two RLM celebration picnics with nearly 200 RLM team members and refugees participating. At one of the picnics, a Karen family was reunited with another Karen family whom they thought were still living in the refugee camp!

Five new churches are getting ready to welcome their first refugee family and join the 44 past and current teams who have put the Apostle John's teaching into action, showing the love of Christ in word and deed. Love is what this ministry is all about. . . mutual love and learning between churches and refugee families with God being glorified through his people "being his hands and feet" of hope, renewal and restoration.

– Jessica Wills, Refugee Life Ministries Coordinator



IT TAKES A COMMUNITY...

In the past few months, we have welcomed several large families of seven or more members. These families present unique challenges for housing, transportation and furnishings. We are grateful for a dedicated team of case managers and community partners like Bridging, Urban Homeworks and Slumberland. We are also incredibly thankful to the RLM teams, volunteers, and in-kind donors who played an integral role in facing these challenges.



"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words but with actions and in truth."
– 1 John 3:16-18



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www.worldreliefmn.org



CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

Since October 2011, 49 volunteers and interns, including 13 who were once refugees themselves, served as mentors or community & social services liaisons for new arrivals. Thank you, volunteers, for freely giving of yourselves to welcome the "stranger and alien" to our communities.

www.facebook.com/worldreliefmn twitter.com/worldreliefmn refugeesettlementmn.wordpress.com

Invest in the Lives of Refugees

WARM WELCOME

The weather is getting colder and many of our new arrivals are ready to bundle up! You can extend a warm welcome to these newcomers with a donation of warm, gently-used/new winter coats, hats, scarves, mittens/gloves, or boots to WRM.

SECURE THE CALL

WRM is now accepting donations of used cell phones, in partnership with Secure the Call. This partnership allows WRM to provide 911 emergency-only cell phones to new refugees who would otherwise not have phone access to emergency services.

GIVE TO THE MAX

WRM will be participating in Minnesota's Fourth Annual Give to the Max Day, hosted by www.GiveMN.org, on November 15. By making your financial contribution on this day, your gift could help us win an extra \$1,000-\$10,000 to increase our capacity to STAND for the Vulnerable.

VOLUNTEER

Sharing your life is one of the most significant investments you can make in the lives of refugees.



Visit: www.worldreliefmn.org/get-involved/ to learn more about and begin prayerfully discerning how you can invest in this unique way.

QUESTIONS?

To learn more, contact us at: 612-866-0462 or minnesota@wr.org. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

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MINNESOTA

A Newsletter for World Relief Minnesota | FALL 2012



Why does World Relief Minnesota really exist?

WORLD RELIEF MINNESOTA (WRM) EXISTS BECAUSE:

- Some 4,000 new refugees continue to come each year to Minnesota – churches and concerned individuals have the privilege of showing refugees, who have lost so much, the love of Jesus through practical service and friendship.
- Our new neighbors have experienced war, persecution, ethnic cleansing and untold trauma – we have the mandate of being God's agents of healing, safety and hope.
- Each year we serve over 800 refugees with immigration and legal services, helping refugees to be reunited with family members; processing green card and citizenship applications; and providing advice and counsel to those who need a listening ear.
- In partnership with local churches we are able to restore lives, help with refugee housing, employment services, English language classes, refugee community gardens and citizenship classes.

Between 1999 and 2009, over 42,000 refugees were resettled in Minnesota, from more than 30 different countries.

Some 77,000 Somalis currently live Minnesota. Minnesota has the largest U.S. Somali population.

The Twin Cities has 100,000 Hmong; 34,000 Russians; 32,000 Liberians; 29,000 Ethiopians and some 25 other refugee populations.

CONSIDER THESE IMPORTANT FACTS:

- Minnesota has the highest number of refugees per capita of any state.

WRM'S MISSION IS TO EMPOWER CHURCHES:
We understand that local congregations offer the best context for assisting the poor to overcome their lack of opportunities and for offering hope and life. Christians exhibit a powerful expression of faith and love for God when we seek to make a lasting impact in the lives of the vulnerable as Jesus did.

Thank you for your support which helps World Relief empower, equip, and strengthen churches to serve their communities, enabling them to act as beacons of hope and of the life-changing power of Jesus Christ. Together, we are transforming the lives of the vulnerable who come to Minnesota looking for a new beginning.

– Bob Oehrig, Executive Director

People of the Book: Somali Adult Literacy Training

EACH WEEK A GROWING NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS from dozens of churches share Jesus with our Somali neighbors through literacy and friendship. "But aren't Somalis Muslim? How can you share Jesus?" you might ask. Because volunteers match up one-on-one, men with men and women with women, on a long-term weekly basis to tutor English and reading they are building relationships of trust. Because they are meeting real needs and getting to know each others' families in the contexts of weddings, funerals, holidays and naturalization ceremonies, they are also sharing life stories. Our students share with us what it means to be Muslim. Likewise we have the privilege to share what it means to follow Jesus. At the end of the day, when we are confronted with our differences we pray that God would reveal Truth to each of us and correct all of us where we have gone astray.

SALT HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS:

- Six SALT sites, with dozens of volunteers, are going strong across the Twin Cities in North, South, and Downtown Minneapolis; in St. Paul at Concordia University and McKnight Road; and in Burnsville.

- Plans are also underway for a new site in Hopkins.

• Churches in other states are beginning to adopt the SALT name and model. SALT is entering its second year in Kansas City, Missouri, while SALT Seattle started this October.

- Internationally, we have shared the SALT Literacy Primer in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somaliland, and even Switzerland.

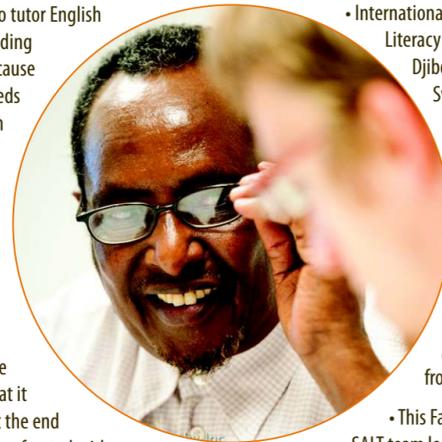
• Earlier this year we provided a SALT training in Kenya to equip 45 workers who serve among Somalis along the border and in Nairobi. Moreover, together with World Relief's Rajo ministries, we trained in Minnesota 140 individuals from 70 churches.

- This Fall, the Bethlehem Baptist SALT team led a training that equipped and encouraged 113 volunteers from 50 churches.

WOULD YOU JOIN US?

The need is great as many more Somali men, women and children would love to have a tutor for reading, conversation and/or homework help. We welcome you to visit and see if SALT is for you.

— Mike Neterer, SALT Director



"In these days of fear and anger when Muslims are protesting around the world, it is a beautiful thing to see Muslims and Christians coming together on a weekly basis to learn together and build friendship even while openly discussing and disagreeing about faith convictions."

A Capital Idea: Refugee Cash Assistance

IT'S BEEN A BUSY AND PRODUCTIVE PAST 12 MONTHS IN THE REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE (RCA) department, World Relief's in-house cash assistance program for new refugee individuals or couples who have no minor children. We served 81 new families and exceeded our annual goals by nearly 20%. RCA helps these new arrivals with a modest few hundred dollars a month as they seek work and get established in their new adopted home.

We're encouraged by new and deepening partnerships with local social service agencies and ethnic communities who speak highly of our RCA program. Despite our office's distance from where many new arrivals live, we are thrilled to see growing numbers of secondary migrant and asylee cases applying for RCA benefits through World Relief. We're thankful for the opportunity to expand our impact and see refugees "graduate" from new arrivals to contributing members of our community.

—Linnea Stevens, Refugee Cash Assistance Coordinator



Fresh Start – Fresh Vegetables: Refugee Church Gardening

THIS SUMMER WAS A GREAT GARDENING SEASON for churches and refugees in the World Relief Gardening Program. The weather cooperated and the pests were manageable. Tomatoes, zucchini, green beans, and green leafy vegetables were abundant. Over 100 Karen and Bhutanese refugee families accepted the hospitality of four churches and several individual families, and tended gardens where they grew vegetables to nourish their families and sell to neighbors. The churches also continued to donate produce to local food shelves.

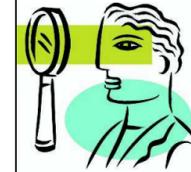
The church gardens provide an avenue for the fulfillment of WRM's vision - mutual physical, emotional, and spiritual transformation. Through these gardens, nutritious and fresh vegetables are made available to people who really need them while relationships are built among refugees, congregations, and communities. The gardens offer unique opportunities for cross cultural exchange and help newly arrived refugees transition to life in the USA. One of the Karen gardeners explained that he likes to visit his garden every day to see how the plants have grown. He said that when digging in the soil, planting

seeds, and tending the garden he is comfortable, happy, and at peace.

Peace Lutheran Church offered gardening plots to six Bhutanese families for the first time this year. At the start of the planting season they met with the families to go over the ground rules for the garden. The families were asked if they had any questions. The only question asked was from one of the elders: "When can we start?" The next day they were in the garden digging and planting.

Other churches expressed interest in starting gardening projects next year. We are hoping and praying that they will be able to do so. We need more churches to participate in this program, particularly in neighborhoods with the greatest need: North and East St. Paul and South Minneapolis. The ministry opportunities abound. Think about starting a garden at your church next year! Let us know if you need any assistance. We would be happy to connect you to refugee families.

— Dennis Murnyak, Community Gardens Coordinator



DID YOU KNOW?

In the past 12 months World Relief resettled 327 individual refugees from 9 different countries, including 169 Burmese, 79 Somalis and 43 Bhutanese. Our lives are enriched by our new neighbors, their cultures and their contributions to Minnesota and our communities

All Good News! Immigration Legal Services

Hey Clarissa, how are you dear? I'm doing fine and the best news is my wife and daughter got the visa. Everybody is excited. Once again, thank you so much on the behalf of my family and myself too. They will be here after two weeks!

I RECENTLY RECEIVED THIS JOYFUL EMAIL, ENTITLED "ALL GOOD NEWS!" from my client Theodore.

Three years earlier, Theodore, a bright young professional in an East African country, heard news of a very different kind: his political activism had once again gotten him in hot water and his oppressive government was hunting him down. Already imprisoned once and fearing another imprisonment, he fled to visit his brother in the United States. Leaving behind his pregnant wife, he had intended to stay in the US for just a brief time until things at home cooled off. When his government continued to search for him and harass his wife for months on end, he came to the heart-breaking realization that he could not safely return home. He applied for political asylum in the United States. In September of 2011, days after finally receiving the asylum grant, Theodore arrived at our office, eager to start the process to bring his wife and little daughter to the US.

WRM's immigration legal department represented Theodore on his US Immigration applications, building a case for the relationship between him and his family. Despite submitting an enormous amount of evidence — marriage certificate, birth certificate, photos, emails, phone records and money transfers — his case still encountered hurdles. WRM helped him navigate DNA testing for his daughter and communicate with the US Embassy in his home country.

In just a few weeks, Theodore will look into the eyes of his three-year-old daughter for the first time, and embrace his wife after three years of separation. Your support for WRM allows us to provide high quality immigration legal services for hundreds of refugees and immigrants every year, bringing good news after much hardship for families like Theodore's. As Theodore wrote in another email, "We really thank and respect your organization and you all, helping us like your brothers and sisters... all these times. Thank you all!"

— Clarissa Robison, Director of Continuing Services

THE FRUIT OF OUR LABORS: REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

In World Relief Minnesota's Refugee Employment Program, countless hours are spent guiding our participants through each step of their job search. The tremendous amount of effort put forth by our clients and their job mentors alone gives cause for celebration, but here are a couple highlights which also exhibit the fruits of their labor:

- A young woman from Burma (Myanmar) recently applied for a position at a Culver's Restaurant job fair. She was called that same day for an interview, and during the interview, found out that hundreds of people had applied for 14 job openings. She must have really impressed the hiring staff, because she got the job!
- An 18 year old Somali high school student, who arrived in Minnesota with no family and very little community support, knew that he had to get an after-school job to survive. While continuing with his education, he now works as a janitor in the evenings and serves as a tenant mediator/liaison in a house that welcomes other newly arrived refugee men.



World Relief continues to equip churches to offer citizenship classes to refugees and immigrants as part of our larger Immigration Legal Service program. Contact us if your church would like to know more about offering citizenship classes.