

# You Are the Salt of the Earth

## A True Story

LET ME START FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. This past summer, Rachel, a friend of Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT) was riding her bicycle when a Somali woman who was lost approached her asking directions to the Social Security office. Rachel called her husband Garret for help with his GPS. He stopped what he was doing to take the women to the government office. On the way, the Somali woman confided in Rachel that Jesus had been visiting her in her dreams, each time holding a lantern, and telling her "I love you."

A week later the Somali woman invited Rachel and Garret to her home. Rachel interpreted the dream by showing her Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet." Rachel told her that Jesus is the Word of God, that He loves her, and that she can trust Jesus to lead the Way. She happily received a Somali Bible and the

Magdalena Jesus Film DVD. She wants to meet Somali Christians. She wants her children to know the Lord.

I love this story because it shows God is already working, and we just need to respond as he leads. The evening before the bike ride Rachel had asked the Lord to lead her to someone who was lost and needed to know Jesus. Though Rachel was not trained as a missionary, God used her because she was willing. She may not have felt ready as she was sweaty, wearing sweats and no make-up, yet, she and Garret had what counts – a loving and supportive marriage and a willingness to set aside their agenda to help a stranger.

God uses ordinary people and sacrificial gifts of time and finances given through each one of us to accomplish his redemptive purposes. May the Lord use each one of us to find "the lost" as we love our neighbors and disciple those he is calling to Himself.

—Mike Neterer, SALT Director

## Church Refugee Gardens

### A growing Idea

THIS PAST GROWING SEASON, 16 CHURCHES PROVIDED REFUGEE GARDENING PLOTS to nearly 300 refugee gardeners across the Twin Cities; an increase from just five churches in 2012.

There are already seven new churches confirmed to welcome refugee gardeners to their churches during the 2014 growing season.

During August two field trips were organized for interested congregations to visit some of the church garden projects. Some 22 different churches were represented on these informational tours. One participant commented,

*"It was great to see so many churches who have "converted" lawns into productive gardens for refugees and their neighbors. It was encouraging to get other people's perspective on good practices for church refugee gardens and to see how other churches have allocated plots, tools and handled those who want to also donate their surplus food to local food shelves."*

World Relief Minnesota is grateful to all of the church volunteers who are making this program a huge success. We are especially thankful for Dennis Murnyak, our volunteer gardening coordinator, for his faithful leadership and to the Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM) and the Minnesota Food Association (MFA) for our fruitful partnership in promoting and expanding refugee gardens to hundreds of families.



God uses ordinary people to accomplish His redemptive purposes.



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# NEWS

## BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

Something big is happening at World Relief Minnesota in January 2014. We cannot share the details quite yet, but the change will further refine our mission, allow us to develop new partnerships and address the unique needs of refugees and immigrants in Minnesota. Stay tuned as together we move towards our next milestone of resettling our 10,000th refugee in Minnesota in the next 18 months.



## GIVE TO THE MAX DAY

Don't forget. November 14, 2013 is Give to the Max Day (giveMN.org). Together, we have the power to raise thousands of dollars for World Relief and other Minnesota Non-profits.

Please visit our page at [www.GiveMN.org](http://www.GiveMN.org)

## THANK YOU!

Never before have we received so many donations: But, please don't stop giving. We rejoice that God has supplied thousands of donated household, kitchen and linen items for new refugee families. Thank you! Specific current needs are for gift cards to purchase winter coats, boots and special items like rice cookers; and for bus cards to help refugees get to ESL classes and various appointments.



To protect the privacy of those we serve, some names have been changed.



## Demonstrating God's Goodness

The number of new refugees World Relief Minnesota is helping continues to explode. In the past 12 months we have resettled 396 additional refugees from 14 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle-East. This number represents 60 more individuals than we budgeted . . . meaning that our dedicated staff have been working extra hard to personally serve our new friends as we scramble to find affordable housing, beds, furniture, and all the items a refugee family needs to start their new lives in Minnesota.

and volunteers in the name of Jesus and experiencing individual lives impacted with the love of God.

Recently a World Relief Minnesota volunteer shared this story:

*"Ali and I were working on some English tutoring and especially a few "How often?" questions and responses. When I asked him, "How often do you pray?," his answer was "five times." I encouraged, "five times a day." "Yes," he smiled and together we named the five times. He looked at me surprised that I knew when the five times were. Then he asked, "Rebecca, you Muslim?" "No," I replied, "I follow Ciise (Jesus)." Smiling and nodding Ali said to me, "Ciise good, kinisaad (the church) good."*

As Ali proclaimed, "Jesus is good, and His church [is] good." Thank you for helping us express the goodness of Jesus to those whom God has clearly brought into our communities to be our new neighbors and friends.

—Bob Oehrig, Executive Director

But it is not about number. It is about each refugee and immigrant being served by World Relief Minnesota staff

World Relief Minnesota empowers, equips and strengthens churches to serve their communities in the name of Jesus.

## 9,000 Refugees

### *But it's Not About the Numbers*

**R**ECENTLY, WORLD RELIEF MINNESOTA REACHED a huge milestone. We resettled our 9,000th refugee in cooperation with area churches and partner ministries. This 9,000th refugee arrival was part of a family of Bhutanese refugees resettled in the Twin Cities from Nepal.

Over the past 25 years, World Relief Minnesota has had the privilege of helping refugee from nearly 50 different countries find new beginnings, new hope and new connections.

However, not all the new refugees resettle in the Twin Cities. Recently, the Minnesota State Refugee Coordinator, Gus Avenido, was in Marshall, MN to meet with county and school people about refugees settling in that area, and to review one of the World Relief Minnesota refugee cases that settled in Marshall.

Our team at World Relief did a huge amount of work to help set up housing and support structures through area churches and local organizations for the family in Marshall.

The State Refugee Coordinator provided us with a report of how the family had been helped by the community with numerous medical appointments, furniture, housing, ESL programs, Social Security enrollment, school registrations, etc. He summarized at the end of his email report:



*"At the end of the long day yesterday I felt I had one of my best days as a State Coordinator. Thank you [World Relief Minnesota] for such a great job assisting to resettle this family."*

Thank you for being part of this growing ministry as God uses ordinary people and sacrificial gifts of time and finances given through each one of us to make a difference in the lives of refugees.

*World Relief Minnesota continues to resettle refugees from across the globe. Our top countries for new arrivals are Burma, Somalia, Bhutan, Iraq and Ukraine. Our next anticipated big population of refugee arrivals – in 2014 and beyond – are displaced Congolese who are living in refugee camps in Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya.*

## Fuzzy Socks & Teddy Bears – A Caring Church



**A**LMOST A YEAR AGO, A KAREN FAMILY OF EIGHT ARRIVED AT THE airport from a refugee camp in Thailand with only a few belongings to their name. They were greeted by a Refugee Life Ministries (RLM) team from Trinity City Church, new friends who had collected donations and set up their new apartment beautifully. They even had little treats on each of their pillows and provided fuzzy socks, princess blankets, journals, and teddy bears.

Over the past year the family and the team have grown close. Initially, the team was nervous because none of the family members spoke English. Through much prayer, God provided, as another refugee family joined them including one who speaks fluent English.

The children soon began school and each Tuesday the RLM team would visit and tutor the children. The family had never celebrated their birthdays before, since in their culture it wasn't significant. Yet, they enjoyed the team's care as they brought over small gifts and a birthday cake to celebrate.

In December they celebrated their first American Christmas with a wonderful time of sharing. They decorated Christmas cookies for the first time in their lives. They heard their first Christmas songs in Spanish as one of the team members, originally from Venezuela, played the guitar and sang. And later, one family member took his turn with the guitar to teach everyone Karen Christmas songs.

Although a new life in the U.S. has its challenges, the family is thankful for the warm welcome of a caring church, new RLM friends who have loved them in the name of Jesus, helped them to avoid identity theft scams, learn English, and plant a garden.

## Immigration News

### *Increasing Need for Services*

**COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM IS** a much discussed topic today in Minnesota, across the country and within World Relief Minnesota's church networks. The fact that one out of every six Twin Cities residents is foreign born and more than 130,000 are not yet U.S. citizens means that there are many people who are currently in need of immigration and legal services. Moreover, current estimates place the number of undocumented residents in Minnesota state-wide at around 100,000. These thousands may soon be looking to churches and ministries like World Relief Minnesota for help with legal paperwork and the "alien registration" process.

No one knows whether and to what extent undocumented people in the United States may be given a

pathway to legal residency and potential citizenship. What we do know is that there are already not enough ministries in Minnesota helping legal residents, like refugees and asylees, with their immigration needs. If any immigration reform is enacted, there are likely to be thousands more who will need caring and affordable legal help.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR WORLD RELIEF MINNESOTA** as we seek God's direction concerning expansion of our Immigration Legal Service (ILS) department as we anticipate major changes in the months ahead. While there are many opinions concerning our neighbors, World Relief Minnesota has chosen to follow God's command to show mercy, practice compassion and hospitality to the stranger. We do not want to forget that as followers of Christ, we all were once outcasts and are now simply fellow pilgrims and sojourners.



### *Happy to be a U.S. citizen*

RECENTLY, AN IMMIGRATION CLIENT WANTED A WAIVER OF THE CIVICS REQUIREMENT FOR THE U.S. citizenship exam, but she did not qualify. After World Relief's Immigration attorney, Christine Burton, explained her options, she and her husband decided to proceed and study hard for the citizenship exam. Christine recently attended the woman's citizenship interview which she passed with no errors! It was tough telling a client who had only started to read after age 60 that she had to take the test, but it was very rewarding to see good advice pay off. The smile on the woman's face and her spontaneous hug of the immigration officer said it all!



#### HOW CAN I HELP?

*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.*

## The Power of Opportunity

### *Employment Help Shifts Outlook*

**MUKHTAR IS A YOUNG IRAQI MAN WHO ARRIVED IN MINNESOTA JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, RESETTLED BY** World Relief. Though many who have been resettled by World Relief lived in refugee camps prior to arrival, Mukhtar came from Amman, Jordan, a common destination for Iraqi refugees before being approved for resettlement. Mukhtar came to Minnesota to join friends from Iraq, but his resettlement experience got off to a shaky start. Since he spoke only Arabic, lived far from the World Relief office, and had very specific expectations of what "successful" resettlement should look like, he seemed disappointed with his new life in Minnesota, and frustrated that more wasn't being done for him.

Mukhtar started meeting with World Relief's employment counselor, Sarah Morgan, a few weeks after his arrival. Sarah identified significant barriers to employment: low English and education levels, limited transportation options, and minimal community support systems. Despite these barriers, Mukhtar seemed anxious to start work as soon as possible. Sarah and Mukhtar often struggled to communicate, but did their best to complete some job applications together, waiting for the right opportunity.

On one occasion, Sarah suggested Mukhtar apply for a job at a local Middle Eastern restaurant, since many employees spoke Arabic. Mukhtar took the initiative to apply on his own and was hired right away as a line cook, despite having no prior restaurant experience. He started out working the lunch shift, but after demonstrating a great work ethic and the ability to learn quickly, he was scheduled for more hours and busier shifts. Sarah has kept in touch with the restaurant manager, who has already given Mukhtar two raises in just a few short months and consistently praised his work. He wishes he had more employees like Mukhtar and hopes to make him a manager of his own location someday!

Once Mukhtar started working, his story took a turn for the better: he bought a car, moved to his own apartment, and quickly transitioned from public assistance to financial independence. Mukhtar's job provides him with a sense of productivity and livelihood that has totally shifted his demeanor and outlook on life in Minnesota. His story is a shining example of the power of opportunity to transform the lives of new refugees.



*A new job provides a sense of productivity, livelihood and a new outlook on life.*

## Meet One of the World Relief Team

NEARLY TWO DOZEN STAFF AND INTERNS MAKE UP the World Relief office team. Each brings unique gifts, talents and a "boatload" of overseas experience in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. One of our newest staff members is Molly Dancer, working in our Resettlement program. She is an administrative support specialist who also helps refugees navigate the Minnesota Health Insurance landscape. Molly writes:

*"Prior to joining World Relief Minnesota, I was residing in London for my Master's degree; studying Migration and Diaspora Studies in Africa and Asia. Fortunately during my time in London, I was able to work with the British Refugee Council as an assistant in their "Refugees into Jobs" program and got a taste of resettlement issues*

*and policies with the U.K. I have also interned with Lutheran Social Services in their Immigration and Refugee Department. Needless to say, I am quite interested in forced migration issues and refugee resettlement. I am pleased to be able to lend a helping hand to the World Relief team and the refugees we serve together."*

We are blessed to have such a high caliber and experienced team of people who work with refugees, church outreach teams and community partners to help refugees make a successful and fruitful transition to life in Minnesota.

