

Dishwashing

A Path to a Better Life



ABDIRISAK, FROM SOMALIA, arrived in Minnesota with his older brother six months ago. To help support his new life in the United States, he almost immediately started working with our Employment Counselor, Sarah Morgan. He was also given support through the Refugee Cash Assistance program World Relief administers for new

refugee arrivals. Abdirisak and Sarah immediately got busy with the job search process. Together they went to businesses to fill out applications, looked for jobs online, and practiced job interviewing skills.

A few months ago, World Relief Chicago shared an employment contact with a local hiring agency that had restaurant locations in Minneapolis which were eager to hire refugee workers. Sarah knew that Abdirisak would be a good fit for one of their dishwashing positions. Abdirisak interviewed and got the job right away!

At first the job was hard for Abdirisak because there was much heavy lifting. However, as weeks passed, he was able to do the job well. His manager was so pleased by his hard work and desire for more work hours, that another World Relief employment client also got a job at the same restaurant. Abdirisak has trained him in and they have become friends. Abdirisak is now better able to support himself while also sending money back to his family in Africa who are living in a refugee camp. Abdirisak told Sarah, "Without World Relief I didn't know what to do in Minnesota. You helped me make a better life. Thank you."

WRM SERVES THE LOCAL CHURCH:

- *As Servant: We build capacity in the local church to serve refugees and immigrants by mobilizing, training, and supporting church-based volunteers.*
- *As Agent: We serve refugees and immigrants on behalf of the church through our established programs and ministries.*
- *As Facilitator: We invest in partnerships with churches, community-based organizations, members of the local refugee communities, and government institutions in order to better serve refugees and immigrants.*

WRM CHOSEN FOR FEDERAL PILOT PROJECT

In the past 12 month, World Relief has received many more new arrivals with complex medical needs. More than one-third of all cases have medical issues which need concentrated services during the first weeks of resettlement. To meet these needs the Twin Cities refugee resettlement agencies have engaged a shared medical social worker who provides us with expertise and consultation. At the federal level, Minnesota was chosen as a site to complete a pilot project to evaluate how to best serve refugees with medical issues into the future.



1515 E. 66th Street
Richfield, MN 55423

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ENGAGING THE CHURCH

- *God continues to bring Refugee Life Ministries (RLM) into more and more churches.*
- *RLM currently has 24 churches involved, with 3 churches preparing to welcome a refugee family for the first time.*
- *Nine refugee families have been matched with a RLM team since January. If we continue at this rate, we will have 27 new refugee families matched with an RLM Team by the end of this year!*



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Celebrating Volunteer Teams

REFUGEE LIFE MINISTRIES hosted its biggest fundraising event of the year, the Roar for Refugees, in April. Over 350 people attended learning of the plight of refugees, hearing from Refugee Life volunteers and enjoying Christian comedian Daren Streblov's humor. It was a fun evening that gave both long-time volunteers and people interested in getting involved a chance to show support and learn more.

Rob Scott, Refugee Life Ministries Volunteer Director, gave a moving presentation featuring two videos on the work of the ministry. One of the videos told the story of refugees forced to flee their homes to refugee camps, to wait there often for a dozen years or more, and to journey to a new home in Minnesota. The refugee families that Refugee Life Ministries serve have left all that is familiar and normal behind.

The other video interviewed volunteers who work with refugee families, showing some of the obstacles they had, how God overcame them, and how God transformed them and the refugees they were working with. The ministry is not just about the refugees. These volunteers got outside of their comfort zone, lived out the Gospel and experienced God in deeper ways because of it.

The night was a testimony to the work God has been doing in both the refugee families and the 24 church teams of volunteers that work with them



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A Newsletter for World Relief Minnesota | SUMMER 2013



THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBEY GOD'S COMMAND TO LOVE (Luke 10:27) and take part in his great commission (Matt 28: 19 -20) is what we, as Christians, all should strive to do. Serving on the board of World Relief Minnesota has opened up opportunities for me to fulfill these commands, while sharing the time and talents with which God has so richly blessed me.

World Relief Minnesota is all about transforming lives. We are transforming lives of refugees and immigrants through tangible expressions of love and countless opportunities to be "salt and light" in a fractured world (Matt 5:13-16); by doing cross-cultural ministry in our own backyard; and by being the "hands and feet" of Jesus as we show compassion and friendship (1 John 3:17). The amazing thing that happens when we practice mercy and hospitality, not only are refugee lives transformed, but we are transformed, too.

I am involved with World Relief Minnesota because this organization has an energy and excitement about carrying out their mission to refugees and immigrants. Every board meeting I attend, every time I read a Director's report, every time I interact with staff and volunteers, I am struck by how God has his guiding hand on the organization. God is leading it a long, it is definitely on the move!

When I joined the board about 18 months ago there were 12 churches involved with our Refugee Life Ministries (RLM) program and five churches working with our Refugee Gardening Program. There are now

over two dozen churches loving, supporting, and encouraging refugees through RLM, while the number of churches offering garden plots for refugees has more than tripled. And that growth does not even include the growth in our SALT (Somalia Adult Literacy Training) program with new sites recently opened in Burnsville, Hopkins and Willmar, MN. There are so many good things happening that truly demonstrate compassion and hospitality to outsiders (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2).

I am honored to be associated with World Relief because the staff demands excellence in all they do. Audits from government agencies come back with glowing remarks. There is care and concern for organizational partners and service agencies that they cooperate with. There is a holistic approach to work, and they don't speak of problems, they speak of opportunities. They are creative.

The staff has abounding energy. In one recent month they began the resettlement process for 30 individuals from Burma, 15 from Somalia, and 2 from Eritrea. They do not quickly grow weary as they attune their hearts to God's heart that goes out to the stranger (Deut 10:18). They do their work empowered by the Lord through prayer.

Yes, being involved is a transforming, moving experience. It's humbling to hear the refugee stories. Authentic friendships, shared support, and mutual encouragement are experienced, and all the glory goes to God!

—Debbie Nauman, WRM Board Member

The Way of the Cross

THE SOMALI ADULT LITERACY TRAINING (SALT) volunteer job description is simple – learn your Somali neighbor's name, and his or her family story as you invest in them to help them improve their English. The job is simple, but not easy because it means sacrificing time and taking up your cross to love your neighbor.

One of the privileges of serving with SALT is learning powerful stories of God's grace from our Somali neighbors. Recently one neighbor told me how he became a refugee when he was nine years old. He and his eleven year old brother were at school when the fighting forced the teachers and students to flee. The brothers tried to walk home but the fighting became more intense in that direction so they followed the crowds to the seacoast. They survived by stowing away on a fishing boat that carried refugees to a neighboring country.

They had enough water for the journey but when their boat was forced to anchor offshore the refugees began to die from dehydration. My neighbor told me, "That's when I first recognized that the symbol of the cross means mercy." The Red Cross saved their lives with water to drink and first aid. My friend told me,

"Ever since that day, when I see the symbol of that cross I know it means salvation."

By God's grace, after two years of not knowing if anyone else in their family was still alive, the two brothers were reunited with their family and resettled in Minnesota.

Where is SALT headed?

Since SALT's (Somali Adult Literacy Training) beginning in 2003 the Lord has blessed us to multiply into ten outreach locations with approximately 1,000 Christian volunteers helping as many as 1,000 Somali neighbors learn English over the past ten years. We are grateful for these many friendships and many Gospel seeds planted, but we are not content to plant only, we are longing for a harvest. In the next ten years we want to be obedient to the first command given to mankind, "Be fruitful and multiply!" And we also want to obey the great commission Jesus gave us to, "Make disciples of all nations. . ."

We are asking the Lord for the privilege of catalyzing Disciple Making Movements through each SALT site where, led by the Spirit, every disciple makes at least one disciple, who also makes disciple-making disciples. We recognize that transforming hearts, families and nations is a humanly impossible endeavor, but with the Spirit of God this is possible. We will remain utterly dependent on Him through a lifestyle of prayer, fasting, and generosity to our neighbors. Remembering the words of a Somali nomad who once said, "The day you can pack your church to fit on my camel is the day I would take Christianity seriously," we will simplify until all we have to offer is all that a person needs • the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and friendship with the People of God.

– Mike Neterer, SALT Director

Will you join us in the SALT mission of following Jesus in the way of the cross to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves? We pray that many of our refugee neighbors will recognize the mercy of the cross through our volunteer service. We pray they will give their allegiance to Jesus as they recognize the same Lord who inspired the Red Cross is the same One who inspires us to love our neighbors here in Minnesota.



Love has no Limits

Adapted from a Facebook posting by Jennie Lorence

LET ME START FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

Several years ago my family decided to become involved with Refugee Life Ministry (RLM) at Grace Church Roseville. We helped resettle a family from a refugee camp in Thailand. They had been forced to flee their home in Burma due to their ethnicity. They crossed the border and resided in a refugee camp for over 13 years. We as a church partnered with World Relief who has done an amazing job of getting people out of the camps, relocating them to the US and acclimating them to our culture.

My parents have hearts the size of the ocean when it comes to refugees. Especially my mom, I'm pretty sure it's her calling in life. She has done so much from making sure all the paper work is done to staying at the hospital late at night helping a frightened refugee woman deliver her "American-born" child. There is no doubt, by the grace of God, that she would do anything for these new friends.

We as a church help refugees get enrolled in school and ESL programs, tutor their children, help them with budgeting, do cultural orientations, help them learn to grocery shop, and get them winter clothing. You name it, we do it. One of "our families" experienced a housing

dilemma caused by the birth of a child and grandma coming to live with them from the refugee camp. This family of 9 had outgrown their house. For a week we tried to find a housing solution. Things became a bit overwhelming, not knowing what to do, but we had to rest in the promise, "God is in control."

Well, my dad woke up in the middle of the night with the answer; we could take one of the children and have them live with us. We talked it over with the refugee family and they agreed to the plan. We would take their son. He would spend the nights with us, go to school and then come to home for dinner. It was all set, I got the guest bedroom ready and I was going to be a big sister!

For years I had tried to convince my parents that I needed a little sibling. Well, God answered my prayers, not once but three times over. The kids felt more comfortable staying together and my mom's heart was too giving to say no, so soon we had three kids sleeping in the room next to mine.



EDITORS UPDATE

Since Jennie's Facebook article was posted on line:

- Jennie has started College
- The refugee family has found new housing and still attends Grace Church Roseville
- All the children are doing well in school
- The father of the refugee family has a job with the Karen Organization of Minnesota
- Grandma is enjoying being re-united with her family

Providing Hope

THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2012 WAS LIFE-CHANGING FOR ME AND MY FAMILY. My father, my best friend, died suddenly at the age of 60 from complications of ALS (Lou Gehrig's) disease. It is heartbreaking to lose a loved one and is still difficult for me to talk about now. However, God was looking out for me, as he always does, and provided me with the opportunity to become Director of Immigration Legal Services at World Relief.

HAVE YOU LOST SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE? Imagine what you would do to bring that person back if you had the opportunity. We in the Immigration Legal Services (ILS) department have the opportunity every day. Many of our clients thought a loved one was dead, only to find out years later that they are still alive. This is the point where we step in. We help with filing forms, gathering evidence, and building a case showing that the relationship is genuine and that the loved one should be reunited with their family. More than anything, we provide hope for our clients. Having been through incredible trauma, separation and uncertainty, the slow process of immigration applications can be very discouraging. Having lost my own father, I understand the desire to see a loved one again. Our department goal is to make that happen – to give our clients hope.

Outside of family reunification, I will be the first to admit, immigration forms are a little dry. The focus tends to be on hunting down addresses and social security numbers, not on the history and fascinating stories of people who are applying. Yet, getting a green card or becoming a citizen is an immense privilege and an exciting time! My father was a long-term green card holder who never became a US citizen. Even though he was eligible to apply, I did not have the opportunity to help him but I now have the chance with many others who are my new neighbors. A client of mine came as a refugee from South East Asia in the 1980s and is now working on becoming a citizen. His ability to learn English is limited due to the trauma he experienced, yet his genuine joy and excitement towards becoming a citizen is evident. He wants to call the United States, the country who took him in, his official home.

Since I started at WRM in October, I have learned a great deal about immigration and how much work goes into a "simple form." Our ILS department works hard to provide excellent, well-informed services to our clients, but what keeps us passionate is knowing that we are changing lives. Your support for World Relief Minnesota and Immigration Legal Services allows us to continue to provide hope for clients, reunite families and to help clients call the United States home. Thank you.

– Christine Burton, Immigration Legal Services

AFFIDAVIT OF RELATIONSHIP PROGRAM

Recently, the US State Department re-opened a unique program allowing refugees from a variety of countries the opportunity to bring their families to Minnesota. The Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) program allows refugees to apply to bring their parents, husbands or wives and children who are under age 21 to join them in the United States. Often, only part of a family is resettled through the US refugee program while the rest of the family is left behind, so this program is invaluable in keeping families together. This program is only available at government authorized resettlement agencies, which means we at World Relief can offer this to our clients!

As you can imagine, there are many clients who want to participate in this program. Our staff is kept busy fielding questions, helping clients figure out if they are qualified to participate and completing applications. There is no government funding for this program, nor do we charge our clients any fee for participating. This means staff time spent on this program must be covered from other sources and we rely greatly on well-trained interns and volunteers. We believe that families are better and stronger when they are together and we are committed to provide this service to refugee families. Please pray that our department continues to have the time and resources necessary to be effective advocates for our clients and help reunite families that have been torn apart.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Since October 2012 we have assisted over 600 clients with immigration services.
- To bring a family member to the United States costs over \$1,000 in immigration fees per person and can take many years.
- One out of every six Twin Cities residents is foreign born
- Over 130,000 Twin Cities residents are not yet US citizens



DID YOU KNOW?

- 411 refugees resettled in 2012 and over 350 resettled already in PY 2013
- 24 Refugee Life Ministry (RLM) church teams are helping refugee families
- More than 100 refugees have gained employment in the past 12 months.
- Over 1,000 students have received SALT ESL training
- Eighteen Churches are offering refugee gardens this growing season