

## New Neighbor Volunteer

Consider the many every-day challenges your family would face if you suddenly found yourselves in a country and culture completely different from your own. How would you communicate with the community surrounding you without speaking the native language? How would you begin to look for a job in this new system? Would you be able to use the public transportation system when you are not familiar with names of streets or neighborhoods? Are there certain laws you don't even know exist? If you or your children got sick, where would you go for treatment and how would you get there? Could you figure out how to do laundry without a washing machine or prepare foods you have never tasted before? If most of your family or friends remained here in the U.S., how would you fill that social void in your life?



Refugees resettled through Arrive Ministries and/or participating in our Refugee Employment Services encounter all of these obstacles and more during their first several months in the U.S. Our New Neighbor Program seeks to empower members of the local church to respond to God's persistent call to welcome the 'stranger' by connecting newly arrived refugee families or individuals to volunteers who provide needed support during critical moments in cultural adjustment. The goal of the New Neighbor Program is for refugees and volunteers to build relationships and participate in cultural

exchange as the refugees resettle in the Twin Cities and begin to look for work. Through this process, refugees and volunteers come to see one another as neighbors instead of strangers. To be a neighbor, whether you are the refugee or the volunteer, is to be a friend, a cultural broker, a teacher, and a learner.

### **How does the New Neighbor Program work? What would I be doing as a New Neighbor volunteer?**

Through experience, Arrive Ministries has found that the goals of the New Neighbor Program are better accomplished when a volunteer starts out with a particular task or set of tasks when engaging a refugee family. This is especially true when the refugees speak little English or the volunteers have not had much experience interacting with refugee families. A volunteer can choose to focus on job mentoring, English language tutoring, grocery shopping, apartment cleaning and maintenance, etc. while also incorporating social time or events into the relationship. Once trust is established between refugee families and volunteers and communication is improved, the neighbor relationship can move forward according to the mutual preferences of the refugees and volunteers.



### **What time commitment is required to be a neighbor?**

Arrive Ministries asks that New Neighbor volunteers commit to meeting with their refugee family about once a week for three months *with the goal of forming an ongoing relationship.*

### **What qualifications do I need to meet to be a New Neighbor volunteer?**

No extensive cross-cultural experience is necessary to be a New Neighbor volunteer. However, Arrive Ministries does ask that volunteers have a strong desire to work cross-culturally and are willing to make a commitment to do so. It is important for volunteers to be comfortable interacting with limited English speakers from cultures that may be different from their own. We ask for volunteers to show cultural sensitivity, flexibility, patience, and a sense of humor towards the refugee family. Volunteers should also be fairly independent, willing to learn-as-they-go while spending time with new families, and ready to go out of their comfort zone to participate in activities with refugees and/or to connect refugees to resources. The best interest of the refugee family must be a top priority in the minds of all volunteers. Volunteers must be willing to maintain ongoing communication with the Arrive Ministries case management team (when applicable) and Volunteer Coordinator to ensure a positive experience for all involved.

### **How do I become a New Neighbor for a refugee family?**

1. Complete the volunteer application and background check form. (Both can be found at the Arrive Ministries website: [arriveministries.org](http://arriveministries.org) )
2. Participate in a phone interview to discuss your availability and interests with the Volunteer Coordinator. We will take your preferences (location, family composition, cultural group, skills/interests) into consideration when partnering you with a refugee family, but cannot guarantee that there will immediately be a family in need of a volunteer who matches all of your preferences. In this case, you may choose to be flexible regarding a particular preference or wait for the right family for you.
3. Attend a volunteer orientation.
4. Meet your New Neighbors! An Arrive Ministries staff member will meet you in the home of the refugee family to facilitate the introduction.
5. Visit your Neighbors on a regular basis and maintain communication with appropriate Arrive Ministries staff members. Report your hours to the Volunteer Coordinator using the Volunteer Activity Form.

Contact: For more information, please contact Arrive Ministries' Volunteer Department at 612-866-0462 or email us at [mnvolunteers@arriveministries.org](mailto:mnvolunteers@arriveministries.org).