
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? 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? 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. Arrive Ministries' 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. 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, we have 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 walking alongside their refugee family for one year, meeting with their family about once a week for at least the first three months and with the ultimate goal of forming an ongoing relationship that will last a life time.

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 desire to enjoy their time with the refugee family, finding ways to have fun and relaxation together. 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](#).
2. Our Volunteer Coordinator will contact you for an interview. 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! The Volunteer Coordinator 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 the Arrive Ministries Volunteer Coordinator. Report your hours and how the relationship is going to the Volunteer Coordinator once a month via email or phone.

Contact: For more information, please contact Arrive Ministries' Volunteer Department at 612-746-5633 or email us at m volunteers@arriveministries.org.