

Arrive Ministries

2022 VOL. 1

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Persisting Through Adversity

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Wedding
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Reflection

1515 East 66th Street
Richfield MN 55423

Extraordinary Scale of Welcome

It is difficult to convey the growth that Arrive Ministries has experienced since the summer of 2021.

Our resettlement team has greeted, found homes, jobs, and services for 247 refugees and Afghan evacuees over the past six months.

Each family has their own individual story of fleeing and journeying to Minnesota involving hope, trauma, restoration, worry, and relationship.

Our team is honored to serve these in transition, as we live out God's command to welcome refugees and immigrants in Minnesota.

We have seen an eight-fold increase in refugee arrivals, requiring an incredible effort by our staff. We witnessed their dedication to the mission of loving our new neighbors practically, socially, and spiritually as they poured out themselves through

off-hours airport arrivals, loading moving vans, and expanding their capacity to prioritize family appointments.

Our work of welcoming refugee and immigrant neighbors to Minnesota could not have been possible without the partnership of the Church. Since September of 2021

“the mission of loving our new neighbors practically, socially, and spiritually...”

more than 62 churches launched welcoming initiatives, and dozens more formed Good Neighbor teams this season to walk alongside new refugee families. We saw a record 592 church-based volunteers step forward in nearly every corner of the state, including our sites in St. Cloud, Willmar and Rochester.

Be encouraged by the stories in this magazine as we celebrate **transformation in the lives of refugees, immigrants and the Church.**

247 arrivals

127 Afghan Evacuees
120 Refugees



592

volunteers partnering with us since September

62

churches launched welcoming initiatives



25

job placements



113

refugee families connected with volunteers through our programs

11

countries resettled from



45

new homes secured for families



September 1, 2021 -
March 1, 2022

Arrive Ministries is dedicated to living out God's command to welcome refugees and immigrants in Minnesota.



A Home for Hospitality

Renting to a Refugee Family

It all started with a letter to surrounding neighbors asking, “Would you be willing to sell your home to Grace Free Church?”

The Fridley church had dreams of buying a home adjacent to their property to rent to refugees. When an interested seller came forward, the church purchased their new rental house directly behind their property.

A Good Neighbor team of volunteers from Grace Free Church formed. When Arrive Ministries learned that a Sudanese family of 7 was on their way to Minnesota, the church’s house intended for refugees wouldn’t sit empty long.

“The paint was still drying when they moved in,” said Melissa. “Half of the Good Neighbor team met the family at the airport, while the other half put the finishing touches on the house, and stocked the pantry with groceries.”

Ishag and Taiba Arbab and their five children

were delighted when they walked into their new home.

“My home is beautiful,” Taiba said on her first day there. The family sat down with the team to share a meal; Ishag dramatically bit into a piece of flatbread and said “My first meal in America.”

“He was so proud and excited to be here, it warmed my heart,” said Monica, one of the Good Neighbor volunteers.

The volunteers have taken a team approach to walking alongside the Arbab family – Julie and

Jerry offer rides to the adults’ ESL classes and the food shelf, Monica learned to cook Sudanese dishes with Taiba, and Melissa invited the Arbab family over for Thanksgiving dinner.

In early 2022, a Sudanese Christian Church started a Sunday service in Arabic inside the Grace Free building. Although not of Christian-faith, the Arbabs have begun sharing in the fellowship of other Sudanese immigrants.

“How amazing that God orchestrated all of this,” said Melissa, adding that the relationship has impacted other church members, “Their hearts are softening and eyes are opening to the plight of refugees with a new compassion for immigrants.”



Jerry lovingly refers to Ishag as “the tornado” due to his level of energy when raking neighbors’ yards and shoveling their sidewalks.



Ishag waves to 4-year-old Huda as she heads to school.

“We’ve kind of adopted them as our kids, since our kids are out of state.

It gives us purpose. It’s mutually beneficial for us,” said Julie, who lives a few blocks away. Julie and Jerry enjoy playing Dominos and Uno with the Arbabs.



Taiba and Melissa sharing a laugh

Taiba considers her new friends to be family, “Mama Julie, Sister Melissa, Sister Monica. We are family,” she says.



Jerry, Julie, Ishag, Taiba, and Melissa

Family Reunification

Long-Awaited Reunion



Lar Paw came to America in 2005 as a 17-year old refugee from Burma by way of a refugee camp in Thailand, leaving behind her mother, Naw Gay.

As soon as Lar Paw arrived in the U.S., she began the process with Arrive Ministries Immigration Legal Services to bring her mother to Minnesota.

When the government finally started her application in 2012, Lar Paw began calling Arrive every week to check on the status of her mother's immigration case. She called weekly for a whole year, and continued to call monthly for the next six years.

Prospects seemed bleak. Many people would have given up. But Lar Paw wrote letters to senators and local government leaders to try to open doors for her mother. Finally, it looked as if her efforts were paying off. In 2018 Naw Gay started the beginning stages of her resettlement journey but before her flight was booked, the pandemic hit the globe.

"There were a lot of covid cases in the refugee camp. I thought, now I have no hope for my mom," Lar Paw reflects. "At that point I felt like, if she doesn't have a chance to come, it's okay. If all I can do is call and send money, then that's what I'll do."

An unexpected phone call came in September: "Your mom is coming!"

"Lar Paw used to call me so regularly that I kept a sticky note on my desk with her name and phone number. As soon as I saw her mom's flight was scheduled I called her that same day," said Rebekah, our Director of Refugee Services.

Lar Paw was completely shocked.

After 16-years they would finally welcome the matriarch of their family. Those years of persistence finally paid off.

On Naw Gay's arrival day, her airport welcoming crew consisted of Lar Paw's family, friends from her Karen church, and many Arrive Ministries staff and volunteers.

"It was a beautiful memory. We were all so happy," said Lar Paw.

Of course, the story doesn't end there. Two days after her flight landed, Naw Gay fell and broke her hip. Arrive Ministries volunteers were quick to respond by building Naw Gay a wheelchair ramp at her house. This ramp gave her more mobility and access as she patiently healed.

Although Naw Gay undoubtedly faces challenges with her recovery, and the change of country, culture, and climate, she is grateful to be in Minnesota with her daughter and grandsons. When Lar Paw asks her

if she wants to go back to Thailand, Naw Gay answered with a definitive "No."

Lar Paw has many plans for the future.

"My mom loves to fish and my oldest son does too. I can't wait to

drop them both off by the river, and tell them, 'Enjoy your time together!'"

Throughout these nearly two decades of waiting, Lar Paw says she feels a overriding sense of gratitude, "I have been through a lot in

my life, but nothing could hold me back from getting my mom here. I don't know how long she'll be around, but as long as she's here, I'm happy and grateful. I appreciate this country that welcomed us even though we have different skin color, personalities, thoughts and ideas. This country gave us a home that's safe. I'm very thankful for that."

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Offering a Warm Welcome

Adventures & Celebrations



The Shinwaris gifted Kirsten and Betsy with beautiful dresses from Afghanistan, including a wedding dress for Betsy, which she wore at her wedding rehearsal.

Sam and Kirsten Tindall and their friends Avery and Betsy Platter started volunteering as Good Neighbors in February 2021. The team was paired with the Shinwaris, an Afghan family of 8. After Afghanistan collapsed in August, the Shinwari family grew to include many extended family members who were evacuated.

The team tries to meet with the Shinwari family once a week, typically on Sunday afternoons to help with English.

In the summer they took them to a Twins game, and after Suni Lee won the Olympic Gold Medal, they took the family to a parade two miles from the Shinwari's house. The Afghan family even attended Avery and Betsy's wedding ceremony and reception.

When the holidays rolled around, the Tindalls and Platters took the kids Halloween trick-or-treating, meeting many of their new immigrant neighbors. They also invited the family over for a Thanksgiving dinner and a Christmas party.

Betsy said, "It's also been a privilege to experience Afghan culture. We were invited over during Ramadan to break the fast together, and it was so special to have the Shinwaris share an important part of their lives with us."

"It makes a difference for families coming fresh to the U.S. from areas of trauma to feel welcomed by the community."

During this critical moment when Minnesota is welcoming 1,300 Afghans to our community, Sam believes that now is the time for Christians to share the love of Jesus by offering our new neighbors a warm welcome.

"It makes a difference for families coming fresh to the U.S. from areas of trauma to feel welcomed by the community. As Christians, this is a joyful opportunity to show Christ's love to people who could use some comfort, and the joy of learning the depth of Christ's love for them as we build relationships," said Sam.

Philemon 1:7

"Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people."



The Chitwood's son, Boden and the Iraqi family's 11-year-old son were playmates.

Hosting an Iraqi Family

Host Home Reflection



Ashley, Darrin and Boden Chitwood

Inviting a refugee family to stay in our home is one of the best experiences Darrin and I have shared in our marriage. The special bond our two families formed took all of us by surprise.

The first day the family arrived, we were all a bit nervous. As we talked and learned more about each other over the next few days, everyone relaxed. I felt a warmth and special connection conversing with the mom and teenage daughter. When things got lost in translation, we'd all share a good laugh.

Darrin enjoyed taking tea after dinner with the dad, uncle, their teenage son, and 11-year-old son. Their FIFA soccer video gaming soon led to a competitive tournament in our basement.

Like one large family, we cooked, ate, and shared Iraqi tea together nearly every day. We talked about culture and faith, paged through each other's photo albums, went for walks, and laughed together as real friends.

The whole family loved our son as their own. Uncle sang Iraqi children's songs to Boden, Mom played Iraqi peekaboo and fed him cookies on her lap, the

entire family even cheered Boden on as he took his first steps; they were nearly as excited as we were.

Before leaving, they said they now feel like they have family in the U.S., and we felt the same. They weren't just friends, they had become family.

The day they moved out, the dad offered kind encouragement: "This is just the beginning." We look forward to making many more memories with our dear friends.

We are so grateful to have shared daily life for three weeks with such a special family.



Safa and Jessi (L & R ends) with their kids

The Bond of Two 'Strong Moms'

As a nurse, Jessi has always felt a tug on her heartstrings for the immigrant population in St. Cloud. When Jessi was introduced to Safa, a Somali single mother newly resettled in St. Cloud, she realized that pull was divine.

"It was an incredible revelation that Safa wants to go to school to be a nurse and I am a nurse. That felt like God's divine placement," said Jessi.

Currently, Safa works at a poultry plant in St. Cloud and her employer has taken notice of her hard work ethic, promoting her to a lead role with a substantial raise.

"Safa will say in her English, 'I am a strong woman, a strong mom,' and

she is, she's incredible!" said Jessi.

As a new immigrant working an overnight shift, she is also learning English, practicing to get a driver's license, and raising her 9-year-old daughter, Mariam. Safa plans to go to nursing school in Minnesota once her English is more proficient, and Jessi has no doubt that someday soon Safa will make her dream a reality.



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