

# Arrive Ministries

A woman wearing a green hijab is holding two young children. The child on the left is looking down, and the child on the right is looking at the camera and smiling. The woman is looking down at the children with a gentle expression.

2024 VOL. 1

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On Her Own,  
but Not Alone

† 4

Family Torn  
Apart by  
Conflict

*Welcoming Refugee and Immigrant Neighbors*





# Loving Beyond the Welcome

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Executive Director

Spring is upon us, and we are reminded of what this season represents: new beginnings, fresh starts and life blooming all around us. Our new refugee neighbors come to Minnesota with these spring-time hopes of a new beginning and fresh start. With Christ-like hospitality we welcome them by extending the hands and feet of Jesus in this precious moment of arrival to their new home.

In this edition, you will read a story of Habiba who arrived with the excitement of her children experiencing snow for the first time!

The long-awaited resettlement to the U.S. for Zaher and his family who were finally welcomed by one of our Good Neighbor teams after nine long years. As Arrive staff and volunteers we witness firsthand the power of these stories that inspire us to continue to welcome.

Beyond the welcome of those first three months, we know spring-time hopes can quickly fade in the face of difficulties, loneliness, and barriers to thriving. In Habiba's story you will read of the hardships of parenting

alone while separated from her husband who remained in Kenya. Similarly, Fareed and Sameera were separated in the chaos at Kabul for 26 months before being reunited with the help of their Good Neighbor team.

We are called to love our neighbors with a Christ-like welcome and love

that extends beyond the welcome.

Many of our new neighbors need more time and support than those first few months provide to overcome the challenges of a new home.

We all need a community to walk through life's

challenges. With the power of friendship, our new neighbors can build a network of partners to navigate a new culture, learn English and technology, get a job and more.

We get to be a part of dreams coming true like the story of Roya expanding her online cooking channel to preserve Afghan culture despite the diaspora. When we love beyond the welcome we become more like Jesus. We become agents of transformation; and we are transformed by that love.

**“Our new refugee neighbors come to Minnesota with these spring-time hopes of a new beginning and fresh start.”**



Job interview practice

## 27

Homelands of the immigrants served by Arrive Ministries



Citizenship celebration in Willmar

## 10

Programs assisting refugees beyond the welcome period



1-1 technology tutoring

## 4

Regions with Arrive programs: Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Rochester, Willmar



**Habiba and her good friends at a fall bonfire birthday party**

# On Her Own, but Not Alone

A Network of Supportive Friends



Habiba's first day in Minnesota was exciting, showing her one and three-year-old children snow for the first time. Leaving her husband behind in Kenya until they are approved to be reunited in the U.S., she was essentially now a single mom.

Her excitement soon dwindled to despair, as each day passed while caring for two small children in a new land on her own. Even walking to the grocery store felt overwhelming.

"It was a really shocking cultural difference. It was really tough to walk to the grocery store with two strollers, then having to push them back filled with grocery bags," said Habiba.

At the airport Habiba's case manager from Arrive Ministries introduced her to a team of volunteers from Crossroads Church who offered to walk alongside her family during their first year in Minnesota. Habiba was cautious at first.

"I was alone with my kids, I felt lonely and confused and I didn't know what to do. These families asked if they could help me as part of their family," said Habiba.

**The Good Neighbor team stepped in to assist Habiba in navigating each new day.** Every aspect of Habiba's life: living arrangements, finances, medical care, employment, transportation, social engagements were touched by this team through prayer and practical support.

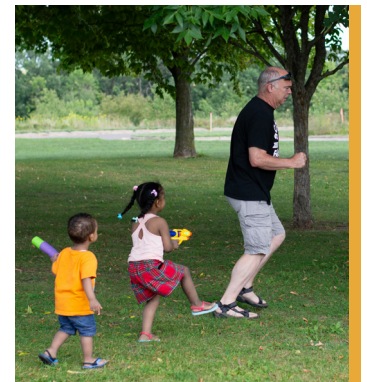
The team, in return, fell in love with this small Ethiopian family.

"She is very smart, capable, fun to be around and funny, she's a gracious host," said Dawn, a volunteer.

If grocery shopping in the winter was challenge number one, imagine the whole host of logistical barriers Habiba had to overcome in finding a job, childcare, and transportation. Dawn said the team worried a lot and prayed even more, knowing Habiba's stress was affecting her sleep and appetite.

When Habiba found herself a custodial job next to a childcare

**"It is beyond my ability to express how amazing they have been at easing my transition."**



center that offered a shuttle for their employees, the group was in awe of God's provision.

"We all felt like it was a God-sized miracle, Habiba recognizes God in her story in a big way," said Dawn.

Habiba also recognized the goodness in her new friends.

"There is nothing they didn't do. I have felt more cared for, supported, loved, respected, and accepted in my one year in Minnesota than I ever felt during my decade living in Kenya," said Habiba.

Habiba is proud of herself for getting to a place of self-sufficiency within one year, but mostly her boasting focuses on her new friends.

"When I think of what I have received from these friends of mine, it is beyond my ability to express how amazing they have been at easing my transition."



# Family Torn Apart by Conflict



Fareed and his son together after 26 months apart



The last time Fareed, Sameera, and their two children embraced was to part ways amidst the chaos at Kabul airport in 2021. Fareed, a transport manager at Bagram Air Base, who also owned a car dealership, stayed in line with their young daughter to board an evacuation airplane and eventually made their way to America.

As a journalist who covered the Taliban, Sameera had received multiple death threats and decided to go into hiding. Sameera was pregnant at the time and went with their 6-year-old son to a cousin's house for many months until they could escape to Pakistan.

"I was thinking how can a 3-year-old daughter live without her mother? Life is not good without her mother," said Sameera.

Shortly after giving birth in Pakistan, the Ayoubi's third child died, sending Sameera's already spiraling worries into a tailspin.

"When I lose my baby, I lose my hope," said Sameera.

Around that tragic time, life was

hard for Fareed and their daughter in Minnesota. Fareed worked 12 to 15-hour overnight shifts, only sleeping a few hours during the day.

Arrive Ministries connected the father and daughter with a team of Good Neighbor volunteers; led by Megan and Dan, possibly changing the trajectory of the Ayoubi's lives.

While Megan and other volunteers supported the family with childcare and regular visits; Dan worked with an immigration attorney and Representative Ilhan Omar's office to file the proper family reunification requests for the Ayoubis.

"Many times we would wake Dan up in the middle of the night with our troubles, and he would solve our problems," said Sameera, who had secured a visa to get to Spain by that time.

The team of advocates negotiated with the State Department and immigration authorities to speed up the family's reunification process.

"I don't know if Sameera would be here today without the help of Rep. Omar's office, and it makes me proud

that I was able to help grease the wheels a little bit," said Dan.

Finally, **26 months later, a reunion scene unlike any other**; Sameera ran for her daughter who jumped into her arms, and the family of four collapsed into a pile on the airport floor.

"I couldn't control myself," said Sameera.

"It was unbelievable, I can hardly remember that time without crying," said Fareed.

Dan and Megan were honored to witness the moment these four broken hearts mended back together.

"It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," said Dan.

Early on, Sameera was shocked to see how much English her daughter spoke. Fareed had warned Sameera of the cold weather approaching, but once Sameera met their faithful friends who had helped her from afar, she knew where their home was.

"She told me she liked Minnesota people and that we would stay here," said Fareed.

"It was amazing and frustrating and tedious and sweet. At the end of the day, being able to help this family was one of the most fulfilling things in my life," said Dan.

**"It was unbelievable.  
I can hardly  
remember that time  
without crying."**



Megan and Dan lead a Good Neighbor team of volunteers



The Ayoubi family together again, Sameera not pictured due to privacy preferences

# Cooking Star in St. Cloud

Teaching Afghan Culture Amidst Diaspora



Murtaza and Roya showing one of their favorite dishes to make, kabuli palaw, a rice and lamb dish with carrots.

As a young girl in Afghanistan, Roya learned to cook traditional Afghan cuisine from her father. Following two international moves that uprooted her family's lives, Roya's culinary skills are a trusted companion, offering a dependable source of income no matter her dwelling place.

Roya's family fled Afghanistan for Turkey in 2015; where she first employed her talents by launching a social media cooking channel. The advertising revenue and bartering partnerships helped her family make ends meet while living as refugees.

"I decided to cook online because I had small kids and I could not work outside the home," said the mother of four.

The channel called "Teaching Afghan Food" has gained a worldwide following, amassing a total of 100,000 subscribers on Facebook and YouTube. Her videos, averaging 10 minutes in length, clearly explain how to make traditional Afghan food, including her favorite dish, mantu, a savory beef and onion-filled dumpling, and kabuli palaw (seen in photo above).

"There are many people who cook better than me, but my commenters say I explain the recipes very well," said Roya.

Roya's 9-year-old son Murtaza is the same age as she was when apprenticing under her father, and is now the "Teaching Afghan Food" channel's charming sidekick.

"He is like a movie star, he tests the food that I am cooking, and

compliments how delicious it is. My older son edits and uploads videos. It's a family business."

Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, more than 3.6 million Afghans fled to other lands in search of safety, creating a diaspora of Afghan people. Roya now sees her cooking channel as **a source of cultural preservation for Afghans watching her lessons all across the world.**

"I receive much feedback from many young Afghan women and men who escaped from Afghanistan and are not living with their families but need to cook on their own and never learned from their parents. They appreciate being able to learn to cook Afghan food by watching my videos."

Roya's family arrived in St. Cloud in early 2024, with the resettlement support of Arrive Ministries staff and a team of Good Neighbor volunteers. While her family finds their footing in a new community, Roya's dreams are still sizzling on the front burner.

"I wish to be a very famous cook in the future, and maybe my husband and I can open up an Afghan restaurant someday."

## 6 of 500

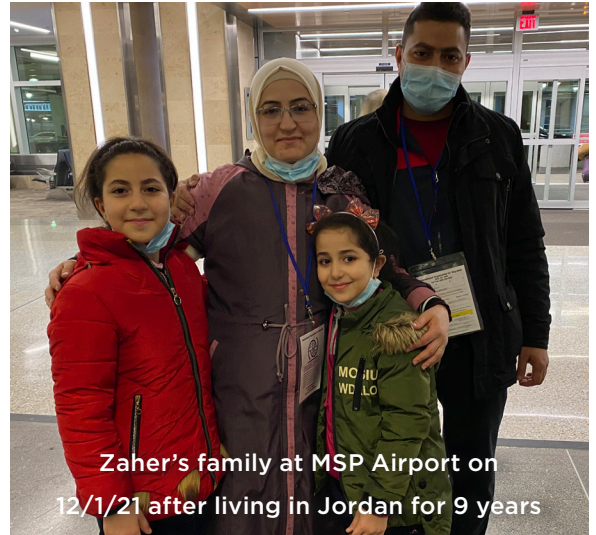
Roya's family accounts for 6 of the 500 refugees we will resettle in 2024.

Find Roya's cooking channel at  
[@TeachingAfghanFood](#)  
on YouTube or Facebook





Zaher's daughters, Siba, 10 & Haneen, 13, spoke to a large audience at our Listen event about overcoming their fears of not knowing English on their first day of school. Siba said, *"It was really hard, but I got through it."*



Zaher's family at MSP Airport on 12/1/21 after living in Jordan for 9 years

# Living in Limbo

In search of safety during a civil war that erupted across Syria in 2012, Zaher found danger at every turn.

"We could not find any safe places; some were under attack from the air, other places had shooting everywhere. I could get arrested or killed for no reason at all," said Zaher.

Zaher, his wife, and their baby girl moved to Jordan to find a place of respite while waiting for safety and order to return to Syria. But as is the case for many who flee violence and persecution, **a resolution is never promised, and one's land could be plagued by bloodshed for a lifetime.**

Zaher and his wife welcomed a second daughter in Jordan, while Zaher worked as a furniture reupholsterer, but their life was hard. The infrastructure and weak economy in Jordan weren't able to support the influx of nearly a million refugees from Syria.

"It was a disaster for the Jordanian

people and the Syrian people."

Zaher's family applied for refugee status, and after multiple interviews with the United Nations (UNHCR), they were accepted in 2016 to be resettled in the United States.

"We felt so good and finally started to plan for our future."

That is until their case hit a major roadblock.

"My case stopped in 2017 because of the previous president."

At that time refugees from Syria and other

predominantly Muslim countries weren't allowed to be resettled in America due to President Trump's ethnic-specific immigration bans. The family waited on pins and needles for four years and were relieved to get the green light to travel to Minnesota in Dec. 2021.

Arrive Ministries staff and a team of volunteers from Berean Baptist Church accompanied the family during their first year in Minnesota.

"Moving to the United States from countries with different systems and cultures, as a refugee, you can feel lost. It was so

helpful to have (them) take our hands along the way," said Zaher.

"We appreciate what this country has given us, and we hope to help others who are suffering from difficult circumstances to start their lives here."

The first life they welcomed to the U.S. was in 2023 with the birth of their son, a U.S. citizen.

**"We appreciate what this country has given us, and we hope to help others who are suffering from difficult circumstances..."**



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## Volunteer with us

Befriend, assist, and tutor our new neighbors.



## Rent to Refugee Neighbors

Landlords play a crucial role in extending welcome.



## Donate

Support the work of Arrive Ministries.



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