

Arrive Ministries

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4

Neighbors for Good

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Transformed
by Friendship

Welcoming Refugee and Immigrant Neighbors

Our Mission Continues

Wendy Meyering,
Executive Director
of Engagement
and Operations



Prayer night
“For Such a
Time as This”

Multicultural Worship
Night with 4 immigrant-
led church teams



At Arrive Ministries, our mission is clear: to seek life transformation for refugees, immigrants, and the church. Since 1988, we’ve resettled over 12,000 refugees with the dedicated partnership of more than 5,000 volunteers. We believe that God deeply loves the foreigner and calls us to do the same.

Through our programs of employment counseling, immigration services, education workshops, and volunteer support, we are committed to journeying alongside refugees for the long term. In the past 18 months, 4,200 refugees have been resettled in Minnesota. While challenges persist in the refugee resettlement process, this season offers unique opportunities for hospitality, compassion, and making a lasting impact.

We remain committed to

assisting our new neighbors as they transition from surviving to thriving. This work is made possible through strong partnerships with employers, volunteers, and the local church. Together, we are witnessing lives transformed every day.

In this volume, you’ll find powerful stories of

“We believe that God deeply loves the foreigner and calls us to do the same.”

transformation: cross-cultural friendships that reshaped two families’ lives, a newcomer with entrepreneurial dreams eager to

contribute, refugee parents who give thanks daily for their children’s safety, and cultural workshops equipping immigrants to navigate life in Minnesota.

We are grateful to have you as part of this community. Your partnership is creating lasting connection, support, and growth. Together, we are making a profound difference in the lives of refugees and immigrants across our state.

4,200

Refugees resettled in MN since October of 2023.

5,000

Volunteers empowered by Arrive Ministries since 1988.

12,000

Refugees resettled by Arrive Ministries since 1988.



Annie volunteers as a Good Neighbor with an Afghan family

Transformed by Friendship

Good Neighbor Reflection

Annie's heart for refugees drew from the wellspring of her Christian faith. As she has stepped into cross-cultural relationships over the years, she found her faith deepened as a result.

"The Lord kept putting refugees in my life and on my heart," she explains. "Getting to know people on the margins has been life-changing and so influential to my faith."

Her journey began with volunteering as a homework helper for a Somali family through Arrive Ministries after leaving her teaching career to care for her newborn. "This

could be a great way to scratch my teaching itch and learn about a culture I didn't know much about," Annie said. That small step sparked a growing passion for supporting immigrant families.

The fall of Kabul in 2021 stirred Annie deeply, leading her to join one of Arrive's Good Neighbor teams to help an Afghan refugee family. "They were very isolated, no one spoke much English, and they had a lot of young kids," Annie recalls.

Being the only team member with daytime availability, she grew close to the family,

teaching the mother English while their kids played. Over time, she became like family.

"I tell them I'm their crazy, American auntie now," she said.

Annie's family has also become friends with a few Afghan men who live down the street. These relationships with refugees have shaped her understanding of the Kingdom of God.

"In the American church, it is easy to shield yourself from struggle. Jesus says he is with those who struggle," she observed. "I feel like that is really the work of the Kingdom, and it is vital to the health of the American Church."

These cross-cultural friendships have also transformed Annie's perspective.

"I had to evaluate how my time and my schedule had become an idol and to learn to be more flexible," she said. For Annie, it's not just about giving, but growing together in mutual respect and understanding, building relationships that reflect the heart of God.



Annie's kids love playing with their new friends

"Getting to know people on the margins has been life-changing and so influential to my faith."





Bassam and Zainab's family with their Good Neighbor volunteer team.

Neighbors for Good

Safe Landing for Syrian Family



Abby enjoying Zainab's delicious cooking



Long before resettling in the U.S. with his family, Bassam learned the barbering trade and opened a salon in his homeland of Syria.

"After the war began, my family moved to Lebanon as refugees, where I also started barbering and landscaping businesses," he said.

Bassam is proud of his skills and dreams of contributing his entrepreneurial abilities in Minnesota. "I came with three skills: barbering, landscaping, and tree cutting. Refugees have skills to offer; we want to be productive here."

Bassam's wife Zainab brought her skills of cooking and painting to America which she hopes to use in the workforce. The family's first year in America has had many challenges, but overall, it's a dream

come true. “I feel like I woke up from a nightmare. Here, I feel safe, and I have hope for the future,” said Bassam.

As parents of seven children, the couple is determined to provide their children with a better life and education. “I want my kids to become doctors, accountants, or whatever they aspire to be. We are raising them to be truthful and honest.”

Bassam and Zainab are grateful for the Arrive Ministries volunteers who formed a Good Neighbor team to walk alongside their family during their adjustment period.

“They’ve helped with everything. They made life easier when we didn’t know where to start.”

“I feel like I woke up from a nightmare. Here, I feel safe, and I have hope for the future.”

Abby, a volunteer, shares her admiration for Bassam and Zainab’s resilience. “They constantly amaze me with their resourcefulness. Many times,

we came in to help, and they had already done research towards a solution or reached out to others who might be able to help.”

Abby recalls the times spent at their home, enjoying coffee, cooking meals together, and bonding over a shared sense of humor. “I am always delighted to join them in laughter! Their sense of humor carried them through some stressful times. Zainab is an incredible cook, and she always gives back by feeding us.”

Abby fondly remembers an outing to buy flowers and

seeds with Zainab, using a translating app to ‘ooh and ahh’ for hours.

“Our friendship really blossomed that day!” Abby says. “Zainab takes pride in making her home as beautiful as she can for her family.”

The Good Neighbor team has been integral in many ways, from helping the family open a bank account to assisting with rides to medical appointments, and organizing documents. Most of the volunteers live nearby and play a crucial role in helping their neighbors navigate this new chapter.

Bassam and Zainab’s journey in America is one of resilience, hope, and gratitude.

Bassam expresses a heartfelt wish: “I hope every refugee finds people like these friends to help them through this transition.”



Bassam, a barber by trade gives Arrive staff member, Akram a professional shave.



Zainab, a talented artist and chef, is painting a mural. She posts her artistic creations on her TikTok account.



Digital literacy class taught in St. Cloud

New Skills, New Confidence

Cultural Workshops

No matter how old we are, it feels good to feel capable. This spring, five immigrant women learned an important new skill through our technology classes; for the first time, they independently sent their own emails.

“Several had previously relied on family members for help but were thrilled to accomplish this digital milestone

on their own,” said Samantha Grimsley, St. Cloud Area Director. “Several women are asking for more opportunities to learn about technology.”

St. Cloud has seen a three-fold increase in visitors to workshops at its program center since its relocation

closer to immigrant neighbors.

The technology empowerment success story highlights the growth of Arrive’s workshops which serve as a vital introduction to U.S. systems and culture, while also creating meaningful

connections between immigrants and local volunteers.

By equipping participants with practical skills - from digital literacy

to job readiness - these trainings promote both self-sufficiency and a sense of belonging. As a result, refugee and immigrant families are not only better prepared for daily life but are also more empowered to thrive in their new communities.

“Several women are asking for more opportunities to learn about technology.”



Sites in
Rochester,
Saint Cloud,
Willmar, and
Twin Cities

Workshops Advancing Self-Sufficiency

Assisting refugees integrate into a new culture through:

- Financial literacy
- Safety awareness
- Housing literacy
- Adult education
- Bus training
- Digital literacy
- Job readiness

A Protective, Proud Papa

“For many years I worked for an American humanitarian organization in Afghanistan; because of my work, it not only made me a target, but my family and my extended family as well. We all fled together to Pakistan, and some of my siblings and parents still remain in Pakistan. The uncertainty around the changes in the U.S. refugee process is greatly affecting us all.”

Mustafa and his family arrived in Minnesota in Nov. 2024, after temporarily living for 3 years in Pakistan.



Mustafa's family receiving new winter coats after arrival

“My biggest dream as a father is for my kids to not face danger or threats to their lives in this country; that my daughters are able to study and get an education. The first day they went to school in the U.S. I had the best feeling ever, I was happy that they are safe and protected. I felt like I was on top of the world when I saw them board the school bus. It's simple for us.”



Fatema arrived in Minnesota with her husband and son in late 2024

Free to Lead

Unable to Return Home



“When the Taliban left Afghanistan the first time, my parents gave me permission to attend school in 7th grade. Later, I went to university and found a job with an international organization, working as a social worker for gender equality. I had a big problem with the Taliban in power, they didn't want to accept a woman's freedom. My life was in danger and unfortunately I can't go back.”

“Afghan women are so strong. They don't have enough freedom in Afghanistan, but they are so intelligent, kind, and if they are trained in the workplace, they are fabulous leaders. The United States gave us a chance to start over. My biggest dream is to help people, be positive, and do my best to be a valuable part of this society.”



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Volunteer with us

Befriend, assist, and tutor our refugee neighbors.



Join a Church Class

Equip local church members to connect with refugee and immigrants.



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