

Interfaith Refugee Ministry (IRM) for 2022

As we celebrated our 30th year resettling refugees in eastern North Carolina, we continued our mission: to help legal refugees rebuild their lives through assistance with initial housing, transportation, employment, school enrollment, cultural orientation, translation/interpretation, and English language instruction. IRM remains committed to helping refugees reach and sustain financial, emotional and social self-sufficiency, and to achieve successful integration into the community. We are able to provide services for up to five years for refugees, trafficking survivors, and those who have received asylum.

We continued to collaborate with the school system, employers and healthcare providers, to ensure that accurate information about COVID resources and local and state requirements reached those affected by this crisis.

We used virtual instruction for teaching English, Cultural Orientation, and Civics classes remotely through Zoom. This was a blessing because it allowed us to reach those clients who couldn't come to the office because of lack of transportation or lack of childcare or because they were in quarantine. It also allowed us to expand our pool of volunteers to those who were not local, but who wanted to connect with our clients. Our Volunteer Coordinators provided training and materials. With several grants, we purchased laptops and wi-fi service for clients so that they could learn remotely.

Employment: Employers included Sanderson Farms, Moen, Dradura, DAVCO, Beatty Balfour, and BSH. Our Employment Specialist and volunteers provided job readiness classes remotely to both new arrivals and those who have been here for a while. The classes included work ethics and work culture, resume writing and job interviews. Several refugees attended classes at the VOLT Center in New Bern. The Center prepares the local workforce for jobs in trades such as welding and plumbing and many others. The Center also has simulated assembly lines for BSH and Moen new hires. In addition, one of our clients took and passed the forklift class. We were very proud of her for receiving her forklift certification.

Satellite Office: St. Timothy's, Greenville, continues to provide us office space so that staff has a place to meet with churches and refugees in a quiet environment in the Greenville area. In September, we hired a case manager who lives in Greenville to more easily serve refugees that we are resettling there.

Update on Refugee Resettlement

Who is a Refugee? A refugee is someone who has fled his/her homeland and is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or fear of persecution because of race, religion, ethnicity, political opinion or membership in a social group.

What nationalities came to eastern North Carolina through Interfaith Refugee Ministry in 2022? Refugees arrived from Burma (ethnicities include Burmese, Arakan, Chin, Rohingya), Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

How many arrived in 2022 through IRM? Our total for 2022 was 87 individuals (family units ranged in size from 1 to 5). This number is more than double our number of arrivals for 2021. In addition, IRM assisted 12 Ukrainians and 1 Afghan during the year.

Who determines the number of refugees who may be allowed into the U.S. each year? The President of the United States in consultation with Congress and federal agencies sets a ceiling for arrivals, but there is no guarantee that those numbers will arrive.

What was the national ceiling for arrivals for 2022? That number was set at 125,000. The total number who arrived was 25,465. North Carolina received 1163 or 5% of the national total.

What is the national ceiling for 2023? The number was set at 125,000. IRM's number is projected at 195.

Since 1992, over 3,400 refugees have made their homes in eastern North Carolina. The faithful support of the Diocese, churches, and individuals welcomed these strangers and helped them become contributing members of their communities. We are forever grateful to all of you!

Refugee

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower,
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.

(Sounding the Seasons by Malcolm Guite)

Susan Husson, Executive Director
Interfaith Refugee Ministry
www.helpingrefugees.org