

Interfaith Refugee Ministry (IRM) for 2023

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 refugees, and eligible trafficking survivors, Ukrainian and other parolees, and those who have received asylum.

Since 1992, over 3,500 refugees have made their homes in Eastern North Carolina. The faithful support of the Diocese, churches, and individuals who welcomed these strangers and helped them become contributing members of their communities changed their lives. They learned from you that there is still kindness in the world and that Eastern North Carolina is filled with generous people who extended their hands and their hearts to make this a place of peace and safety for those in need. You helped us provide housing, furnishings, furniture, clothing to help Interfaith help rebuild lives.

One result of COVID was the creation of virtual classes for English, Cultural Orientation and Job Readiness. Virtual classes enabled us to reach clients in Greenville, parents with small children, and those who might not have transportation to an on-site class. It also allowed us to expand our pool of volunteers to those who were willing to teach remotely. Our Volunteer Coordinator provided training and materials for ESL classes. There are options now for either on-site or virtual classes for all clients.

Employment: Refugees obtained employment in manufacturing, poultry processing, hospitality, restaurants, landscaping and schools. Our Employment Specialist and Job Developer and volunteers provided job readiness classes remotely and on-site to new arrivals. The classes included work ethic and work culture, resume writing and job interviews. Of the employable refugees who arrived in 2023, 69 were employed by the end of the year.

Satellite Office: We continue to be very grateful to St. Timothy's, Greenville, which generously provides us office space so that staff has a place to meet with churches and refugees in a quiet environment. A case manager who lives in Greenville is in charge of the Greenville cases.

New Position at Interfaith: We have hired a Housing Case Manager for the New Bern office. She finds housing for incoming families, inspects it prior to arrival, and assists with providing needed items in the home. After a family arrives, she visits to review the use of appliances, cleaning products, and the proper storage of food. This has been extremely beneficial in helping arrivals adjust to their new housing along with the new culture.

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.

Who determines the number of refugees who may be allowed into the U.S. each year? By October 1 of every year, the President of the United States in consultation with Congress and federal agencies sets a ceiling for arrivals for the coming year, but there is no guarantee that those numbers will arrive.

What was the national ceiling for arrivals for 2023? That number was set at 125,000. The total number who arrived was 60,014. North Carolina received 2609 or 4% of the national total. IRM's percent of the North Carolina total was 6%.

What is the national ceiling for 2024? The number was set at 125,000. IRM's number is projected at 250. As of December 31, 2023, national arrivals totaled 21,790. North Carolina's total was 864 or 4% of the national total and IRM received 64 or 7% of the state's total.

How many arrived in 2023 through IRM? Our total for 2023 was 163 individuals (family units ranged in size from 1 to 6). This number is more than double our arrivals for 2022. Of those, 29 resettled in Greenville. In addition, IRM assisted 4 Ukrainians with housing and employment.

What nationalities came to eastern North Carolina through Interfaith Refugee Ministry in 2023? Refugees arrived from Burma (ethnicities include Burmese, Karen, Chin, Arakan, Rohingya), Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Syria, Yemen and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Interfaith also served 4 Ukrainians.

We welcome donations of time, talent and treasure. Please don't hesitate to call with questions about what we do, donations, or to explore our volunteer program.

This is my wish for the refugees who arrive here, but isn't it what we wish for all of us?

From **Spirit Wheel** (Meditations from an Indigenous Elder)
by Steven Charleston

“At Home”

“I want you to feel at home
If I try to describe what impact
I want my words to have on those who read them
This is one way to express it:

I want you to feel so welcomed to this place
So intertwined with all those you see around you
So comfortable in expressing yourself
That you would call it like being at home.

The deepest level of kinship we have
Is when we no longer feel like strangers in our own home
But like family in a place meant for us to share

This is an ancient vision yet to be realized.
The vision of a home.
Relationships balanced into a life
That excludes none and honors all.

Welcome home.”

Submitted by,

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