

Church World Service Immigration and Resettlement Program
Harrisonburg, Virginia
Presentation to the Harrisonburg City Council January 12, 2016

Program Activity: This is our 28th year of resettling refugees in Harrisonburg & Rockingham county. In these 28 years we have resettled around 2,700 refugees. In Fiscal year 2015 Oct 1- Sept 30 we resettled 179 Refugees, 142 from Iraq, 19 from Ukraine, 4 Eritrea, 4 from Uzbekistan, 2 from Sudan, 1 from Somalia, 1 from Burma, 1 from Iran.

We represent a public private partnership with the Federal, state, and local governments; local churches, non profits and individuals who provide refugees with friendship, resources and long-term relationships.

Who are Refugees? The term refugee is a legal term referring to people who have fled their communities fearing death or persecution because of their race, religion or political views.

According to the 1951 UN Convention a refugee is a person who (has) a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;

Usually they have left their family, friends, community and possessions behind. Many of them can be resettled in their community or land after the war has ended. A few of them have no hope of returning to their homeland and need to be resettled in a third country. CWS IRP Harrisonburg supports refugees who seek resettlement in a third country. They come from countries such as Eretria, Iraq that suffer from civil war and military occupation. We also accept persons who have political asylum status.

What are our Program Goals? Our primary goal is to help the refugee form long lasting relationships in the community which become the basis of **Self-Sufficiency**. This means a sustainable lifestyle in which the person or family can meet their own basic economic needs in the long term. Our program provides a bridge for new arrivals from their former life in their home country to a new set of cultural, linguistic and practical skills that will enable them to be successful in Harrisonburg. As such we do at a minimum the following **Core Services** in the first month:

1. Safe, sanitary and affordable housing
2. Essential furnishings for their new home
3. Food and food allowance
4. Necessary clothing
5. Access appropriate health programs
6. Access appropriate legal status such as Social Security Cards
7. Integration into the school and ESL system
8. Successful employment

For 28 years we have seen refugees learn English, work in our factories & farms, start new businesses, send their children to universities who then in turn become school teachers, engineers, nurses, physicians and other professionals. We believe their entrepreneurial skills and hard work make this a stronger, resilient city and county.

I want to take this time to also respectfully request a time to meet with city officials to explain more about our program and ways our program can strengthen the city.

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