



SPRING 2017

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AS IN SO MUCH THAT WE DO, VOLUNTEERS ARE THE KEY TO HAVING AN IMPACT ON THESE YOUNG LIVES

PRESCHOOL IN PLACE

Once a week, five young refugee children gather in a courtyard on 49th Street, awaiting the arrival of adults bringing 45 minutes of fun and games. But the purpose of this portion of their week is not just to entertain. It has a much longer-lasting goal – preparing the kids for kindergarten, and a lifetime of learning.

The youngsters range in age from three, to four and a half, and have not attended preschool. English is not spoken in their homes.

“RefugeeNet tutors have helped school-aged kids for years”, says Jake Young, who participates in this new program. “Many of the first graders are already behind their peers in reading and basic math. We aim to reduce, or eliminate that gap.”

Polly Morelli recruited three more adults to form the teaching team. Each week two



or three participate, to allow for flexible schedules. Yet the children recognize, and are already comfortable with the new adults in their lives.

Anne Wedemeyer, an early learning specialist with the San Diego Unified School District, helped outline the program, and provided a list of materials and games.

“The next step is to get more of these teams in place”, says Jake. “As in so much that we do, volunteers are the key to having an impact on these young lives.”

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP

REFUGEE NET IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE KATHERINE BOM'S PROMOTION TO PROGRAM MANAGER

Katherine who has been Lead Outreach Worker, will now run the daily operations of RefugeeNet. Originally from Sudan, she joined RefugeeNet in 2013. Her leadership and dedication to serving fellow refugees uniquely qualifies her to provide us insightful guidance as we move into 2017. Jake Young, who has served selflessly as Executive Director since 2014, will continue to provide administrative oversight and serve as Treasurer on the Board of Directors.



NEW TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NAOMI MADSEN AND LIZ MAHON



Naomi has vast experience working with refugees. She founded and directed a Church World Service resettlement agency and coordinated church involvement at a Catholic resettlement agency. She also served as a national program manager for church involvement in refugee and immigration ministries for the United Methodist Church. Naomi believes firmly that “personal, face-to-face relationships between refugees and community members are transformational, not just for refugees, but for the community.”



Liz recalls attending a presentation by refugee staff members who introduced her to the Episcopal Refugee Network in 2011. “With two sons grown, I was ready to step out of my suburban comfort zone and into the Network’s tutoring program in City Heights. There I met children eager to learn English and glad to have help with their homework. My joy is working with other RefugeeNet tutors from all over San Diego County to provide a positive learning environment.”

The Board recognizes Mike Collier, Joseph Jok and Fr. Dave Madsen, outgoing board members, for their years of service and dedication to RefugeeNet. Board members are an active and integral part of the organization.

NEW FRIENDS

RECOGNIZING COMMON VALUES

St. Alban's Episcopal Church in El Cajon partners with RefugeeNet to provide a food pantry twice a month, serving the newcomer community, mostly refugees from Iraq. First Presbyterian Church, across the street, is a faithful partner in this ministry, providing workers, non-perishable items and funds. A great crew of volunteers and RefugeeNet staff unload, sort, bag and distribute fresh produce and other items.



From that point on, the pantry service was no longer an exchange between strangers. Those serving and those being served, shared a common value and a friendship grew.



Before the food distribution, a mass is held for anyone who wants to worship. Thirty five to forty-five people attend, mostly Chaldean Catholics. The mass is printed in English and Arabic, and sermons are simultaneously interpreted by volunteers.

After the service, all who desire prayer and the anointing of oil are invited to come forward. Without fail, nearly everyone does. Many have friends and relatives impacted by the terror in Northern Iraq. Most were themselves victims of persecution. Through the simple act of offering shade, two groups of strangers became friends and a core service expanded into a healing ministry. As humans we have so much in common. It takes very little to reveal our likeness.

One day in mid-summer 2015, Father Dave introduced himself, and asked if the guests standing outside would like to wait in the church, where it was much cooler. The guests were mostly Chaldean Catholics from Iraq. Many did not realize that the pantry was a ministry of the church, manned by volunteers. Upon entering the church, guests saw the altar, cross and icons, which are things that were familiar to them and their culture.

Learn more about the food pantry, tutoring, or other services taking place at St. Alban's. Please call Program Manager, Katherine Bom at (619) 283-1337.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

At any given time RefugeeNet manages a caseload of over 200 households. We partner with a host of individuals and organizations dedicated to helping our new refugee friends become self-sufficient. In this newsletter, you have caught a glimpse of two of these partnerships, one in El Cajon, and one in City Heights.

RefugeeNet also believes that it is important to educate people about refugees and to dispel erroneous information, which may lead to prejudice and fear. Throughout 2017, RefugeeNet staff and volunteers, will be pleased to attend church forums and community meetings to foster conversations, provide information and talk about volunteer opportunities.

"There are no strangers here; Only friends you haven't yet met."—W.B. Yates

Lisa DuMolt, President, RefugeeNet Board of Directors

*Gala
in the
Garden*

AN EVENING UNDER THE STARS

SATURDAY MAY 20TH, 2017 ☆☆☆ 6 P.M.- 9 P.M.

STONE BREWING IN LIBERTY STATION

2816 DECATURE ROAD #116 SAN DIEGO 92106

I WANT TO SUPPORT REFUGEE NET

I am enclosing \$ _____ for this needful cause.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

To donate, please include this form with a check and send to:

RefugeeNet, 4265 Fairmount Avenue, Suite 130, San Diego, CA 92105

Or you can donate by credit card online, through our website refugee-net.org

To contact us by phone: RefugeeNet office – (619)283-1337

The Network has its own 501(C) 3 tax exempt status.