



**WASHTENAW
REFUGEE
WELCOME**

WRWcommunications@gmail.com

WashtenawRefugeeWelcome.org

[Facebook.com/washtenawrefugeewelcome](https://www.facebook.com/washtenawrefugeewelcome)

Mailing Address:

1501 W Liberty St. Ann Arbor, MI 48103

2019 End of Year Report

Our Mission

Washtenaw Refugee Welcome is a volunteer organization designed to give long-term support to refugees building a new life in Washtenaw County, MI.

WRW utilizes the talents and passions of ordinary people and partner organizations to help our newest neighbors build relationships and navigate their way around the community.



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Dear Friends and Partners,

It has been another fulfilling year working with passionate community members to welcome and support new neighbors in Washtenaw County. It has also been a frustrating year, with the lowest resettlement of refugees in the United States in decades. Our friends at Jewish Family Services were able to continue to fulfill their mission and resettle 150 individuals in our area, but other communities have not been as lucky as us, and many, many families have been left in limbo, countryless overseas. National resettlement numbers are expected to be even lower next year, with categories and requirements that make eligibility difficult.

Once families arrive they face the difficulty of adjusting to a new lifestyle with limited resources, while at the same time finding their lives used as a battleground for political fights. Refugees deserve better. We are committed to walking alongside those who arrive in our community, helping them to thrive and feel welcome. We are also committed to maintaining a high level of capacity to assist those we hope to welcome in the future.

Thanks to the generous gifts of individuals and congregations, as well as funds from the Ann Arbor Main Street Association (from when WRW volunteers worked cleanup at Taste of Ann Arbor), we currently have a balance of over \$4,500 in the bank. Our largest expenses this year were event supplies, liability insurance and direct refugee support. As a 100% volunteer organization, our overhead is extremely low and we have not put any significant effort towards fundraising. We are appreciative of all gifts, which are tax deductible as we are a 501c3 organization. [Please consider a year end gift to WRW.](#)

We are so thankful for a community that is enthusiastic about welcoming and supporting refugees in the United States. Below you will find brief reports on our activities in 2019 and some current needs for donations and volunteers. Thank you for your support and please reach out with any questions.

Emmeline Weinert - WRW Board President
wrwcommunications@gmail.com



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Events - From Sarah Eklov

WRW had a great year full of wonderful events. It all started in February with a Valentine's making party at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Ypsilanti. We shared desserts and made heart shaped cards for those we love. It was a great time to remind each other how much we care for one another. Then we had our annual celebration of World Refugee Day in June at Holy Faith Church in Saline, which was complete with water balloons, outdoor games, and snacks. It was a great day full of sunshine, laughter, and community.

This Fall, we also added a new event at County Farm Parks to celebrate Halloween. We painted pumpkins, played on the playground and ate cider and doughnuts. It was a great day to relax and just be together. And finally, this December we had a Holiday party hosted by the women's group at Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day Saints on Green Rd. They provided a wonderful Thanksgiving feast with all the trimmings, and some of our refugee families also brought dishes from their home countries to add to deliciousness of the meal. It was a fantastic event full of joy and holiday cheer.

Comments from attendees:

- A 35 year old mother of 3 who had been here 2.5 years: "Seeing my kids laughing and having fun this way, this is what I wanted to get out of moving to America. I wanted to know that it would be possible for me to have fun again one day, and today I did. I haven't laughed this much since I got to this country."
- A 36 year old mother of 6 who had been here 3.5 years after the Thanksgiving Dinner: "The last time I went somewhere and saw my kids this happy was at your last event. You gave us such a great gift, for us to have such a nice time with such kind people. We're stuck in the house all the time apart from when they're in school, they really needed this outing, and so did I."
- A 39 year old father of 4 who had been here 3 years: "I love these events for the kids, but even myself, I never get to socialize with people, and I love meeting all of you and getting to talk and get to know you. Your events are the only time I feel I'm connecting with new people, which I missed so much, being so social back home and having no friends here. Thank you for reminding me how it feels to spend time with friends."



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Donations - From Joyce Deren

Thanks to the generosity of the Washtenaw community, needed items are donated and transported to our refugee families. Volunteers have collected dressers, beds, couches, microwaves, coffee tables, mirrors, end tables and kitchen utensils and more. WRW has helped to provide these things to new families resettled in our area by local resettlement agency Jewish Families Services. They have also been provided to families who have been in our community for a few years as their families grow, their needs change and they continue to create their new lives in the United States. It makes a HUGE difference in family's lives when they not only have the necessities like pots and pans and chairs, but toys for the kids, sewing machines, lamps and more.

As needs come up we post them on our facebook page

www.facebook.com/washtenawrefugeewelcome . Thank you to all who respond to these requests. We are always in need of consumable items such as diapers, baby wipes, and feminine products. Also individuals with trucks and vans to help move families to new housing or transport donations. To donate or assist please email wrwcommunications@gmail.com

English as a Second Language Classes

Afifa Coorigan and Susan Clinthorne

Since we began the ESL program in August 2019, we have served over 20 women and one man. We consistently have 10 to 15 attendees. It began as an outreach to tutor women who have not been able to attend ESL because they have small children and/or do not have transportation. We currently have 12 wonderful volunteers who fill the roles of drivers, childcare, or tutors.

Washtenaw Literacy has supported the program by providing training, promotion, and tutors. We receive many learners through JFS. For our learners, we initiated a one time child seat distribution through Mott's Buckle Up program. We are happy to have additional volunteers! Please join us at Masjid Ibrahim in Ypsilanti at 315 S Ford Blvd on Wednesday mornings.



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Financial Support to Refugees - from Maryam Tout

Many refugee families live on tight budgets and one unexpected expense can turn life upside down. WRW has worked to step in and assist families in emergency situations. Funds that were established at Muslim Social Services and through Zion Lutheran Church before WRW's incorporations have assisted significantly in this effort.

Examples:

- A 54 year-old Afghani refugee whose wife and children drowned while they were fleeing the war, had been in the US for 1.5 years and was living alone in an apartment (on waitlist for government housing) and lost his job due to physical limitations from his chronic illness and PTSD. He immediately began job searching and secured another position, but had a gap in income. He used what he had to pay his travel bill and electricity for the month, and we were able to help him with the rent for one month until he started his new job.
- A 60 year-old Iraqi refugee widow, disabled due to polio she had as a child, was struggling with terrible tooth pain and couldn't afford a root canal, as she has no income apart from her 18 year-old son's full time job. She was having difficulty sleeping due to the severe tooth pain, which was exacerbating her depression and chronic pain, and we were able to assist with her dental bill and help her get the treatment she needed.
- An Iranian family consisting of a single mother, adult daughter, and middle school daughter had been in the US for only 2 months, but due to a delay in their government cash assistance and expensive DTE bills as well as special diet expenses and school supplies for the child, they were unable to pay rent. None spoke English, and neither of the adults had secured employment yet. We were able to help pay their rent, and since then both adults have gotten some ESL classes and gained employment.
- A 25yo Syrian mother of 2 had been in the US for 2 years before leaving her abusive husband. He had been physically abusive and controlling, so she was not allowed to get a job, learn English, or learn how to drive. She and her children stayed in a shelter, but had to leave the after getting multiple extensions on their 6-month limit. A WRW volunteer was able to coordinate a sublease, until they could move to a different state with a friend. We were able to pay the sublease so that she wouldn't go back to her husband. She is now happily living with friends in a different state, learning English and having obtained a driver's permit and working at the school her children attend, striving for independence.



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Current Needs:

Interested in getting involved or helping out? Here are a few current needs!

- Donations of consumable items: Diapers, feminine hygiene, cleaning supplies, toiletries
- Other Donations: Strollers, dining tables and chairs, small end tables
- ESL Assistance: looking for tutors, childcare, drivers, etc Wednesday morning commitment
- Movers: folks with trucks or other large vehicles willing to help transport donations
- Admin Assistance: looking for someone interested in helping WRW build/manage our database and other files.
- Drivers: Our friends at Samaritas run an active unaccompanied minor/refugee foster care program in Washtenaw County. They are looking for volunteers to assist foster families with transportation for these refugee youth, especially in the Dexter/Ann Arbor area. If you are interested in helping out contact Kayla Park at kpark@samaritas.org
- Financial assistance - Make a donation online or find information to send a check at www.washtenawrefugeewelcome.org/donate

If you are able to assist in any of these ways, please contact Emmeline at WRWCommunications@gmail.com and she will put you in touch with the right folks.