



The Refugee Network News



A Publication of The Episcopal Refugee Network of San Diego

Autumn 2010

Class is in Session!



Our goal is to continue the significant progress these children are making, but we need your help. We are short on volunteers and may have to cut some students if we are not able to attract more tutoring volunteers who can commit on a regular basis. Expanding the tutoring program to include the students on the waiting list is our goal this year; but we need to add at least 15 committed volunteers to help us. So, if you or someone you know would like to join us, please contact Marilyn Nahas, Volunteer Coordinator, right away. Marilyn's number is: (858) 485-6085.

School has started again which means the tutoring program is in full swing. The Tuesday and Thursday afternoon tutoring sessions at St. Mark's in City Heights accommodate approximately 35 children per afternoon (70 total students). This program has proven to be extremely useful to these students; after three years of working with the children the tutors are able to see progress in reading and comprehension skills, as well as other improvements. Our new tutoring program on Monday's in El Cajon did well during the first spring session and we are looking forward to continued success this fall. The Board agreed to appoint an education consultant to test the students regularly to ensure progress in English is being made but we need donations to fill this appointment.

Another way our donors can help us is to donate clothing and other items to the students. With winter around the corner the children are in need of jackets, sweaters, jeans, closed-toed shoes, socks and under garments for children ages 7 to 18. So, please clean out those closets and donate to The Episcopal Refugee Network's tutoring program today!

We are located at 4305 University Ave, Suite 630, San Diego, CA 92105

*Please be sure to visit our Website to see what we do as a charitable organization:
episcopalrefugeenetwork.org*

FOOD! FOOD! FOOD!

Today's priority remains FOOD as it has always been for newly arrived refugees; enough to feed hungry children until the food stamps arrive some 45 days after arrival, enough to feed families without jobs.

We have a unique delivery system and the first two paragraphs give you a view of the program as seen by two university students who accompanied the distribution. That two young ladies should be so enthusiastic says a lot about how we are doing things. Don't you agree?



Last week I accompanied Nadia and Abdelhalim on their weekly Thursday food distribution trip through City Heights. I have been volunteering for the Network as a tutor for the past two years but never have I taken the opportunity to go into the homes of the refugee families. Interacting with the refugees in their homes immersed me in their culture as well as introduced me to the extreme need these people have.

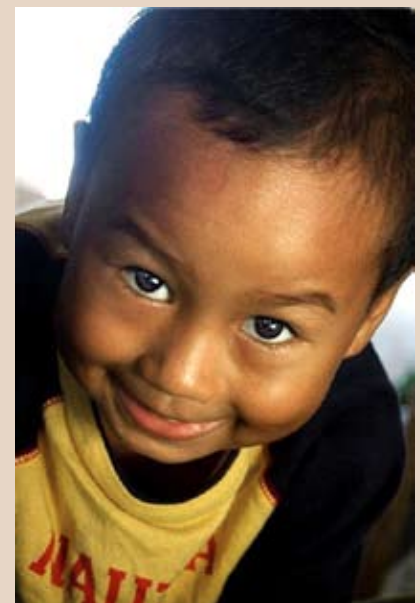
I recognized the elementary students I tutor in their run-down apartments helping mom and dad receive the food delivered inside. As I look at their parents, I see they are tired and burdened. They still have smiles on their faces but I realize the stress they are under. The U.S. is a wealthy country and these refugees are in the poorest of poor conditions. Life must be difficult - working minimum wage jobs or facing unemployment while caring for a family is no easy way to live. Meanwhile a large population of the Karen and Sudanese barely speak English in the midst of a foreign way of life. The refugee community forms a tight-knit group to help one another out in the constant struggle which makes each day a little easier to face.

Robin Sickels, sophomore at UC Riverside

Visiting the neighborhood in City Heights and meeting the refugee community through the food distribution on Thursdays has shown me what true joyfulness looks like. During these distributions, we visit each home individually and are greeted with two similar things: smiles and laughter.

During the summer, many of the Sudanese refugee children are at home and see us when we visit them in the afternoon. Seeing us, we are greeted with a flood of children. Each child runs to us and welcomes us with an enormous smile and open arms. Seeing their eyes light up when I speak to them makes my heart warm. Their eagerness to see us and willingness to speak—even when there are some language barriers—create a cloud of energy. There are melodic rings in their sparks of laughter. Although many of these families live in dilapidated conditions, the refugee children are bearers of joy and jubilation; their happiness brings life into their communities. With their smiles, refugee children are beacons of joy. And, in many ways, they are the light in the bustling city and show me that there is hope in the city.

Phoebe Shieh, senior in Sociology at UCSD



Today you will see food distribution centers scattered over the city with lines of people and cars pulling up to collect food to augment their welfare checks, or even working people who have difficulty in meeting family expenses.

What is needed more is the support that the Refugee Network gives to the very poorest of the poor - provided you help us, of course! Most of our Burmese mountain hill tribes people are unable to find a job. The same goes for the Bhutanese we serve. If you had never been literate in any language, imagine how long it would take you to grasp the concept of English and its grammar rules - spoken or written. Without a language there are no jobs. This goes on for months and even years at a time when jobs for the poorest qualified do not exist.

Please help us to feed these extremely needy people - they have no cars to drive several miles to the nearest food center. There are no food centers located in the immediate poor housing areas. Take a bus you say? Monthly tickets now cost \$84. How many bags of groceries can you carry on a bus?

Delivery in City Heights and El Cajon to selected apartment sites where all can come out and get their food is a service we must continue to provide. We need your help to buy gas for the truck and van, to insure them and to maintain them. We need your help to pay the salaries of the staff - a driver, our Sudanese outreach worker and Arabic speaker, and our Karen outreach worker and translator.

We make deliveries after we collect the food from the Food Bank and from Food for America. Please join us in our rounds one day. It is so heart-warming and thrilling to see people converging from the apartments around and helping each other get a fair share of the produce we bring.

PLEASE SUPPORT US. This service is vital for the refugees and their health and it is very expensive for us to finance.



Our schedule is:

Tuesday afternoons

City Heights

We distribute to Karen, Karenni and Chin families and to our 36 refugees from Bhutan

Thursday noon until 3 p.m.

City Heights

we distribute to Sudanese and Darfuri refugees

Tuesday mornings

Farragut Circle in El Cajon

We distribute to Karen, Karenni, Sudanese and Iraqi refugees

A Leg Question

At staff meeting last week Hilda (our Karen outreach worker) asked how the SSI (Supplemental Security Income) decides on awards to injured people. Her question was "Why does someone with one leg missing get more money each month than someone with both legs missing?"

I wish that had not been a serious question but we work with a number of refugees who have had their legs blown off by land mines. The Myanmar military forced them to walk in front to detect land mines. Thanks to the generosity of a reader we were able to provide a good wheel chair for the legless Karen man. He was so excited and is really quite active but cannot manage stairs in his apartment block and there are no elevators. He has three children and lives in City Heights.

There Are Many Ways to Support The Refugee Network

The economy has not only been a challenge for The Episcopal Refugee Network, it has taken its toll on our supporters too. Since the beginning of the year we have been searching for creative ways our supporters can continue to donate to their favorite charity without reaching into their pocket books. The following list of donors contributes a percentage of your purchase to us, with no additional fees!

Ralph's: If you shop at Ralph's you are in for a treat! Ralph's Community Contribution Program will donate a percentage (up to 4 percent) of your overall purchases to us every quarter. All you have to do is register your Ralph's REWARDS card with The Episcopal Refugee Network by taking the enclosed letter to Ralph's on your next shopping trip. The clerk will scan your REWARDS card and the letter once to link your card and the Refugee Network. **Added bonus:** you can pass your letter on to your friends, family and co-workers so more people can donate to us!

Alternatively, you can register your REWARDS card online with The Episcopal Refugee Network at ralphs.com Click on Services, Community Contribution, then click on enroll and complete the information with the organization number: 92143.

Causemunity: If you like to shop online, please use our personalized Causemunity Web site. Make episcopalrefugeenetwork.causemunity.org a favorite on your browser and use this link to do all of your shopping. There are hundreds of retailers including Target, Amazon, Office Depot, iTunes, Dell and many others who will donate a percentage of your purchase to The Episcopal Refugee Network!

eScrip: The Episcopal Refugee Network earns cash rewards when you shop through eScrip vendors! All you have to do is register your grocery shopper cards and/or debit and credit cards. When you use registered cards and shop at participating merchants, a portion of your purchases are automatically donated to us! You can also use the eScrip Online Mall and eScrip Dining by Rewards Network. Go to escrip.com/program/3ways/index.jsp to learn more. You will need our Group ID Number to link your information to us: 500024338.

If you know of any other organizations that have similar rewards programs, or if you have questions about those listed here, please feel free to e-mail our Development Coordinator, Sheré Martinez, at smrefugeenetwork@gmail.com.



I Want to Support The Refugee Network

I am enclosing \$ _____ for this needful cause.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

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

Please clip and enclose this form and your check in the envelope provided.