

POWR Post

November 2010 (Vol. 1, Issue 2)

The POWR Post is a monthly e-newsletter sharing success stories of the USCCB/MRS Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees program. Do you have any news items, stories or pictures relating to your parish program that you would like to share? If so, please contact Daniel Sturm at dsturm@usccb.org.

with regards,

~Daniel Sturm, MRS Special Projects Manager

Donations

Registering as a Car Dealer (Richmond, Virginia)

In order to be able to legally accept and pass on car donations, we have researched the technicalities of registering as a dealer. After acquiring a dealers license, the only big hurdle is insuring the cars during the period between donation and gifting to a refugee with a drivers license.

Marilyn Breslow, marilyn.breslow@cccovva.org

Overwhelming Response to Refugee Cooking Class (Portland, Maine)

We are excited to use the format of an "introductory foreign country cooking class and meal to follow" as a way to introduce our program to the parishes. Due to the overwhelming response to our first event, we are planning another cooking class at St. Pius X Church. The community and media feedback was great. The links below describe the event.

<http://www.immigrantkitchens.com/2010/10/story.html>

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2wmnvvg>

Bonnie Bagley, bbagley@ccmaine.org



Warm Coats (Arlington, Virginia)

The San Francisco based nonprofit, "One Warm Coat," distributes donated coats to needy individuals. One of its partners is the Burlington Coat factory. Customers who donate a coat to the store get 10% off their purchase. We were assigned to the Bailey's Crossroads store here in Virginia, and the winter coat drive program started at the end of October. Last year, this location collected 300 coats for charity. We hope to get this many coats for our clients this year. The president of "One Warm Coat" told me that, based on what we do and who we serve, our offices throughout the country would all be eligible to apply. If any of your offices need coats for your clients, this is really a great opportunity!

<http://www.onewarmcoat.org>

Rebecca Cormier Ruiz, r.ruiz@arlingtondiocese.org

Packing for New Refugee Families (Des Moines, Iowa)

A local parish spearheaded a month-long project entitled "Our Challenge of Faith: Packing for New Refugee Families." The volunteer specialist spoke during a kick-off weekend, describing who refugees are and what the program is about. During the initiative, parishioners were encouraged to pack bedding, cleaning and kitchen kits for refugees.

Megan Thibodeau, mthibodeau@dmdiocese.org

Employment

Creating a Refugee Resume Book for Employers (Jacksonville, Florida)

We created a new guide with resume and background information for potential employers and mentors, to give them the chance to review our clients' skill sets. This resource will be available to employers at every POWR event. Additionally, a database has been created to establish a POWR network.

Shannon Cutler, scutler@ccbjax.org

Parishioners' Temp Agency Hires Refugee

A local parish introduced us to a temp agency run by a parish member. This agency conducted an in-house interview recruitment fair at MRS and hired 14 refugees for full-time employment through the spring of 2011. Some will have an opportunity to stay on after this time period, based on their work ethic and performance. We will have another "in-house interview day" within the next few weeks, for another round of hiring!

Judith Gough, jgough@ccaoh.org

Outreach

Involving Catholic Laity (San Antonio, Texas)

Catholic laity are involved in refugee assistance and efforts are being made to engage the parish on a more corporate level, and to capture the values they add to the program. For example, St. Francis of Assisi offers a "Mobile Loaves and Fishes" service that reaches out to the hungry and feeds refugees in the apartment complexes on a weekly basis.

Paula Walker, pwalker@ccaosa.org

Marketing Refugee Soccer Stories (Amarillo, Texas)

I was able to secure a television story on KVII in Amarillo about a local refugee soccer team. One of our employees is the team's founder.

Dena Dyer, ddyer@cfsama.com

College Partnerships

Recruiting Law Student Volunteers (Chicago, Illinois)

We have begun a partnership with Loyola Academy and have gained three volunteers for an entire semester who are working on adjustment concerns. We have also formed a partnership with RUSH University nursing students who will begin a needs assessment to determine some of the health educational needs of our clients.

Marie Jochum, mjochum@catholiccharities.net

Pairing Education Students with Refugees (Amarillo, Texas)

We met with a local university dean who is interested in giving his students a more global experience. He would like to pair education students with refugee clients for tutoring or other services (at least ten hours per student). The program would start with 25 students in the spring and expand to 75-100 in the fall.

Dena Dyer, ddyer@cfsama.com

Educating Refugee Entrepreneurs (Buffalo, N.Y.)

Through contacts with parishioners our director has become a member of the advisory board at a local college that is offering classes to refugees interested in becoming entrepreneurs.

Becky Mischler, b.mischler@ccwny.org

School Partnerships

Creating a Refugee Ambassador Guide (Indianapolis, Ind.)

We have developed marketing materials that include a refugee ambassador's guide, note cards and ambassador shirts. The U.S. Department of State noticed the materials on its visit and liked the idea. The high school students are energized and excited. They have created a facebook page, recruited their siblings to shadow them, and plan to share the projects with their peers. Other students have contacted our office to volunteer because of the ambassador program.

A pdf copy of the Refugee Ambassador's Guide is attached
Gabrielle Campo, gcampo@archindy.org



Volunteers

Adding AmeriCorps VISTAs (Richmond, Va.)

We are still blessed with VISTA volunteers in each of our three offices, one of whose stipend's cost share is paid by POWR. The volunteers are responsible for recruitment, screening and management. I recommend contacting the Corporation for National and Community Service and exploring the advantages that VISTAs could bring to your program.

Marilyn Breslow, marilyn.breslow@cccova.org
<http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp>

Volunteer Manual Goes to Print (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Our Refugee Resettlement Volunteer Manual will go into print in December. Included are the evaluation forms necessary to monitor refugee-mentor relationships. The cultural competency section focuses on Burmese and Iraqi refugees. Training will be mandatory to make sure that all mentors can serve refugees in a timely and effective manner.

Cristina Grisham, cgrisham@ccbq.org

Volunteer Management Resources

Idealist.org

This website offers a myriad of resources related to volunteer management and recruitment.

<http://idealist.org/en/vmrc/index.html>

International Rescue Committee Volunteer Management Guide

This guide book leads you through the A to Z's of establishing and running a successful volunteer program.

<http://tinyurl.com/2b7x54g>

ServiceLeader.org

The website offers a wide range of information from the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service.

<http://serviceleader.org>

USCCB/MRS Members Only Website Volunteer Management Resources

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/diows/programadministration.shtml#volunteerism>

Volunteer Match

This online service matches interested volunteers with organizations that need help in metro areas across the U.S.

<http://www.volunteermatch.org>

Working with Volunteers Clearinghouse

This website features articles, statistics and other resource materials related to volunteering and volunteer management.

<http://www.energizeinc.com/art.html>

Answers to last month's question: "Conservative Pastors"

Question:

I wonder if you might have any advice about how to address very conservative pastors on the issue of why MRS helps refugees who are not Catholic. I have had some challenging conversations with pastors who wonder why we are helping Muslim refugees when they think we would do better helping Christian refugees who are also in need of assistance. [Anonymous POWR participant]

Replies:

The Good Samaritan

The story that immediately comes to mind when I hear this argument is the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel. A Samaritan, hated by the Jews of the day, was the only one who took pity on the Jewish man who was robbed, beaten, and left for dead on the side on the road. His fellow Jews (even a priest) chose to walk on the other side of the road and ignore his obvious need for help. This is a powerful message of God's equal and unconditional love and concern for all humanity, no matter what race, religion, culture, etc... The challenge to these pastors is "Can we do any less and still be faithful to Christ's command?"

Jim Kuh, USCCB/MRS Associate Director for Organizational Development and Support

One Human Family

For these people who flee from violence or persecution, the international community has taken on precise commitments. Respect of their rights, as well as the legitimate concern for security and social coherence, foster a stable and harmonious existence. [...] The Church recognizes this right in every human person, in its dual aspect of the possibility to leave one's country and the possibility to enter another country to look for better conditions of life. [...] All, therefore, belong to one family, migrants and the local populations that welcome them, and all have the same right to enjoy the goods of the earth whose destination is universal, as the social doctrine of the Church teaches. It is here that solidarity and sharing are founded.

Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Refugees and Migrants
7<http://tinyurl.com/26jj4qp>

Reflections on the Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI

This year, Pope Benedict has really tackled this issue, and in a seemingly more personal way than ever before. [...] They are "insightful" because of the Church's long tradition of caring for migrants and refugees. It is a history of caring not just for immediate human needs, but also of really caring for the "the person" of the refugee and the migrant. [...] Moreover, how, as Christians, can we *not* put ourselves in the shoes of these least fortunate? For Christians, remembering this through the lens of the Holy Family as refugees from Egypt might be a useful exercise.

Rebecca Cormier Ruiz, r.ruiz@arlingtondiocese.org

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