



## Well Worth the Wait

*A Message from the ICSJ Parish Refugee Effort Committee*

**A**nd a long wait it was! Our Afghanistan family arrived March 29 at O'Hare and we were finally able to spend time with them in their apartment in Skokie this past Thursday evening. The six of them—Dildar, the father; Binafsha, the mom; the boys Idress (age 10), Shoab (age 8) and Mohamad Aoiab (the sweetest three-year-old on the planet) along with their sister Yasra, age 6—greeted us at the door with the biggest smiles and strongest hugs you could imagine.

They had spent the first few weeks with Binafsha's sister while their apartment was being painted and furnished (thanks to our generous Parish!). Having relatives so close is highly unusual but, in this case, such a blessing, as Dildar had been increasingly concerned about his and his family's safety in Kabul. And the pure delight in their new surroundings was so obviously apparent to all of us.

Dildar is in hospitality training at Heartland Alliance, a non-profit that helps refugees find employment. They hope to identify a position for him at one of the downtown hotels. Binafsha is registered for ESL (English as a Second Language), but caring for their youngest child prohibits her from regular attendance at her afternoon class. But we think we have the answer to that: ICSJ volunteers will provide ESL training for her over the summer until she can enroll in a morning class come fall. That way, Dildar can be with their three-year-old before he leaves for his training. The three other kids are in school—grades 1, 3 and 5—and soaking up their classes in their newly acquired English!

Brother Joseph from Catholic Charities was

with us for this first visit and helped us in trying to elicit from them specifics as to what they could use NOW. Which was difficult, because they are so delighted to be where they are now, safe and sound, in their new home. But digging a little deeper, we discovered a few items that could help: a bike for Dildar, as he is walking about a mile now just to buy the groceries; a few fans for the upcoming hot summer months, because there is no air conditioning in their apartment; soccer and basketballs, both favorites of the children; and legos, of course, the most pre-ferred item for boys of all ages.

Because of the generosity of our Parish, we still have enough money to help another refugee family. The current situation is that some refugees are still able to come into the US; the ban instituted by the President is on hold by the courts. BUT the number of arrivals of refugees into the United States had been reduced from 110,000 a year to 50,000. And Catholic Charities fears that quota will soon be met.

Therefore, since we raised sufficient funds to help another family, we are exploring other options to reach out to refugee families who already are on their way to Chicago or just recently arrived with no sponsoring Parish. Next week, we hope to let you know more about this.

We have to end this with another acknowledgment of the wonderful Parish we have here at ICSJ. Only through your overwhelming generosity and your understanding of the crisis of the current refugee situation, were we able to bring this Afghanistan family to our City—and consider reaching out to another. Thank you so much.

---

Learn more about the effort and how you can get involved at  
[www.icsjparish.org/refugee-effort](http://www.icsjparish.org/refugee-effort)