

## Committee Update

# Be Careful What You Ask For

Especially with our overly-generous Parish. Two weeks ago, the Refugee Volunteers asked for help in collecting clothing for our three refugee families for what will be for them a very different winter than they have ever experienced.

And the flood gates opened. This past week, we sorted and folded and arranged by sex and size piles and piles of kids, womens and mens pants/shirts/sweaters/jackets/jeans/coats/shoes/scarves/gloves etc. For example, we had 34 pairs of jeans in the womens room and over 75 coats in the kids room.

Saturday the families came in and were able to choose, with the volunteers help (one being a one-time Nordstrom speciality shopper) whatever they needed to get through their first Chicago winter. When they first arrived, a little urging was needed

but they soon got into the spirit of the day—especially our latest family of “girls”—mother, twin 23-year-old daughters and adult granddaughter who are all Rohingya from Burma.

By the time the families left and the remains were divided, grouped, labeled and packed, we discovered we had 48 bags (large garbage bags!!) that will be picked up by Catholic Charities to distribute to other refugee families.

There are so many of the volunteers that I would like to “call out” by name for their above and beyond effort to make this clothing drive happen. But the problem is we have an

extraordinary group of volunteers who have stepped up to do any number of things that were not in their original job description of “visits once or twice a month.” Planning a baby shower for our second family, noticing the weather report of Snow and bundling up the family to do a Target run to get some heavier jackets for the school kids, helping arrange for a new and better job for Dildar, the Afghan father who worked as a

US military interpreter in Kabul, bringing their own children on visits to accelerate the introduction of American life to the refugee kids plus any number of festive Birthday parties.

And the amazing thing in all of this, which is NOT a surprise, is we all get so much more than we what we give. A number of us just sort of sat back and watched in delight as Ah Ka, the

father of the new born Susanna, discovered that he could converse with the Rohingya mother from Burma—same dialect. And Abby and Aurelia, 4th graders at our Parish school whose moms were helping out, becoming friends with 10-year-old Idrees from Afghanistan in the space of about 10 minutes!

It doesn't get any better than that. And so, Ta sha kor to all our generous parishioners—that's Thank You in the Afghan Dari dialect (courtesy of volunteer Mary Prendergast).

— Betty Woodward, ICSJ Refugee Effort volunteer

