

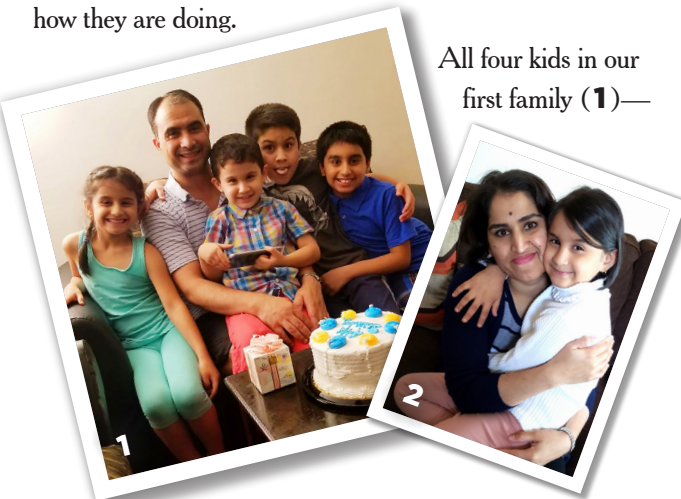
A Message from the ICSJ Parish Refugee Effort Committee

We Are So Blessed

Those of us within the ICSJ community who are working with our refugee families sometimes forget that not everyone is as attuned to the situation as we are. Refugee, immigrants, asylum seekers, etc seem to get all bundled into one package. But it comes down to this important fact: a refugee is someone who has been FORCED to flee their country because of war, persecution or violence. Today, that number reaches nearly 26 million, 3 million more than in the previous year, with children under the age of 18 making up over half that number. Nearly two-thirds of those refugees come from just five countries, two of which are the original homes of our ICSJ families: Afghanistan and Myanmar.

With the Holiday time approaching, we are celebrating our friendships with our four refugee families— plus our single Ethiopian gentleman—and wanted to let you all know how they are doing.

All four kids in our first family (1)—



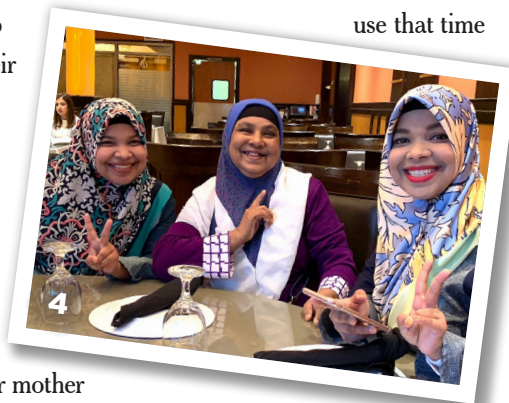
who arrived nearly two years ago from Afghanistan—are doing well in school—in fact, the boys both say they want to be doctors when they grow up! Binafsha, the mom (2), is studying to take her drivers test while Dildar, the dad, is working at a law firm.

Our second family (3) has certainly made Chicago their home. Both Lin and Aa Ka, the parents, are taking



English classes but say that their three-year-old son Tristan speaks the best English. He loves to play with any mode of transportation—especially trains—and is now in a pre-K class. His younger sister Susanna loves that, as she then gets all of mom's attention!

Our "twin Girls" (4) arrived last year with their mom and are Rohingya, the stateless Muslim minority from Myanmar. They have been working in housekeeping at the Thompson and Whitehall hotels BUT, as is the case with a number of our refugees, as the number of tourists decline in the winter months, the work days are also reduced. The girls are hoping to use that time



to further their education— certainly in English but they are also exploring the possibility of nursing. Because their mother

has several medical issues, the girls have learned some skills to care for her. They are all smart, hardworking, generous and loving people. AND are keeping their fingers crossed that their brother might make it into the U.S. sometime soon!

Our newest family is also Rohingya from Myanmar; Ismail and Halayday with their three children—two girls 7 and 3 plus a 5 year old boy (5). The father just got a



job at Koch Poultry while the rest of the family is focused on learning English—the kids are becoming experts on

the alphabet and working to expand their vocabulary. Best of all though is our American pizza!

Elias, our single refugee (6), is from Ethiopia, where he was a journalist and political cartoonist. After 12 years in a refugee camp in Kenya, he made his way here and now has a job at a hotel. But he has just learned it is closing for 8 months for renovations so, by early December, he will be looking for a new job.

Give yourself a Christmas gift by reaching out to one of these families (see the Brighten Their Holidays box). As Cardinal Cupich has told us: "its time to put aside any fear we might have and join together to recover WHO WE ARE and what we represent to a world badly in need of hope and solidarity."



Brighten Their Holidays!

Wondering how you can help this holiday?

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

This is at the top of the list. Dildar's job at a law firm, for example, came through one of our parishioners. And with so many hospitality jobs slowing down during the winter months, it makes life difficult for the families. So any/every thought or idea is more than welcome!

ESL TRAINING

Great if you have a certificate, but a grade school teacher or committed volunteer can help kids understand words/learn vocabulary through pictures or drawings.

FRIENDLY VISITS

A once-a-month outing to a museum, a Christmas play or movie, would be a delightful gift for the whole family.

Learn more about the effort and how you can get involved at
www.icsjparish.org/refugee-effort