

Let Freedom Ring!

The accusations against illegal immigrants can be pretty disturbing—until you dig down into the hard facts. Immigrants brought in \$63 billion more in tax revenues over the past 10 years than they cost and they are employed at higher rates and commit crimes at lower rates than the native-born.

But be there any doubt about how the vast majority of recent refugees—even those from Muslim countries—are working hard, playing by the rules and raising their kids to be responsible citizens, take a look at our first refugee family who arrived from Afghanistan two years ago next month.

At that time, only the father, a former military interpreter, could understand English. Flash forward two years and here is what you will find: the father, Dildar, is

working as Facilities Clerk in a law firm while Binafsha, the mom, has progressed so fast that last week she was able to go to the DMV (that most intimidating of State Offices) accompanied by a stalwart ICSJ

volunteer and take/pass her driver's test and receive her license! To quote the volunteer, "She might never have gotten her license if she were still in Kabul. She was skipping six inches off the ground!"

But the real success story lies not with the parents but their four kids. This past week, nine-year old Shoaib, received an award as the class Star student. Previously, eleven-year old Idress was named Student of the Month

at his Jr. High School and seven-year old Yasra was named Most Responsible in her grade! But here is the kicker: while all their teachers said the children's academics and language skills were excellent, it was their kindness and caring toward others that made them so special.

The US has been the world's leader in refugee resettlement up till a few years ago, averaging nearly 95,000 a year. Today, there are 65.6 million men, women and children forced from their homes, hoping to escape the violence in their own countries. Yet only 30,000 at the most will be admitted into our country in FY 2019, the lowest number in forty years.

Perhaps Matthew, writing about the division of the sheep from the goats at the end of the world, can help us understand that it is Christ's presence we need to recognize in the stranger, the hungry, the suffering, the immigrant. Worth mulling over in this often turbulent time of discussion of refugees, immigrants and border security.... How we treat those in need.

1. Ecstatic Binafsha after passing the test for her Driver's License! **2.** 7-year-old Yasra, with her teacher, receiving the *Most Responsible* award. **3.** 9-year-old Shoaib (holding certificate) along with his proud mom and dad, teacher, and 5-year-old brother Aiob. **3.** 11-year-old Idress with his *Student of the Month* award. **4.** The children show their heartfelt thanks for the wonderful ICSJ Giving Tree gifts. (They are not Christmas gifts, as the family is of the Muslim faith.)

