

# REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Alabama

## REFUGEE POPULATION OF ALABAMA

The United States has been a leader in welcoming [refugees](#) who seek safety from persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Following World War II, the U.S. began welcoming refugees and over time the system has evolved to have a strong infrastructure centered on [public-private partnerships](#). Communities across the U.S. have recognized the important economic and social benefits of resettling refugees. Alabama residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to AL communities. In 2013, organizations and communities across [Alabama](#) welcomed less than 1% of the refugees arriving in the U.S. [Of the 179 newcomers to Alabama in 2013](#), 28 were asylees, 14 were Cuban/Haitian entrants, 129 were resettled refugees, and 8 were Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients who served alongside U.S. troops.

Where are most refugees in Alabama from?

Iraq  
Congo  
Burma  
Afghanistan  
Somalia

## SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN ALABAMA

In addition to [programming](#) to support refugees when they first arrive in the United States, the federal government provides monetary aid through grants to the state, Voluntary Agencies, and other refugee aid organizations for community and short-term refugee support. In the state of Alabama, the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP), which is a part of Catholic Social Services of the [Archdiocese of Mobile](#), provides services to refugees and other eligible populations arriving to the state. Primary program services include cash and medical assistance, access to English as a second language classes, vocational and employment assistance.

### FEDERAL FY14 ORR FUNDING TO ALABAMA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS (AS OF DECEMBER 2013)

Total	Refugee Social Services	Wilson Fish CMA Discretionary Program	Matching Grant	Preventive Health
\$940,182	\$108,043	\$606,739	\$125,400	\$100,000

Another service available to refugees in Alabama is the employment [Matching Grant Services](#), administered by Voluntary Agencies in the state. An alternative to public cash assistance, private agencies match federal contributions and provide intensive case management services to help refugees get employed and become self-sufficient within 120 days of arrival.

*With the vision of Japanese soldiers occupying her native China in the early days of World War II, a young Susan Wu resolved to equip herself for an independent claim on the future.*

Susan Wu, a refugee who became CEO of an Alabama company

## REFUGEES MAKE ALABAMA STRONG

Thanh Boyer of Madison and Loan McAllister of Huntsville are sisters as well as refugees from Vietnam, escaping the horrors of the Vietnamese conflict after the fall of Saigon in 1975 when they were young girls. Thanh and Loan were told by their parents they were going "on a vacation." They were sent by boat to Indonesia along with a couple of hundred other people to a refugee camp. After three days at sea with only a place to sit, and little food and water, the crowded boat was attacked by Malaysian pirates. The young girls and their relatives spent more than a year in a refugee camp. They dug wells for drinking water, washed their clothes in a creek and cut trees to build thatch huts. Boyer, who nearly died of dysentery, said she remembers she often went to bed hungry. Eventually, the girls were resettled in Alabama in 1980. Boyer attended Calhoun Community College and Athens State.

She and her husband, John, met on a blind date. They have two children, Katherine, 17, and J. B., 16. McAllister graduated from the University of Alabama in Huntsville with a degree in electrical engineering. She also met her husband, Paul, on a blind date. They have two children, Allie, 10, and Mandy, 8. Four years after the Boyers married, they decided to sponsor the immigration of their parents and the other siblings. The parents, Tan Duong and Phuong Nguyen, live in Madison, along with one sister, Thu Duong, and brother, Tham Duong. Another sister lives in California. A third sister lives in North Carolina. Boyer and McAllister agree the war was a blessing in disguise for their family. "I would probably be a farmer," McAllister said. "That's hard work. I'm happy I live here. Vietnam is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there."

## LOCAL AFFILIATES AND OFFICES OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN ALABAMA

- USCCB, Catholic Social Services Refugee Program, Mobile

In addition to these agencies, many ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) exist throughout the state to help various refugee communities integrate and succeed in their new homes. These organizations are run by refugees to aid in the resettlement of fellow refugees by providing a variety of direct services, increasing civic participation, and preserve the community's cultural identity and history.