

Refugee Services

NEWSLETTER

May/June 2023



LSS Refugee Services team

Lutheran Social Service Refugee Services offers hope and a helping hand to refugees as they start anew in Minnesota. After years of fleeing persecution and waiting in refugee camps, LSS Refugee Services helps individuals and families rebuild their lives.

Through our different services, and with the help of many volunteers and community members, LSS Refugee Services strives to address the needs of all refugees and walk beside them as they start their new lives in the United States.

IN THIS ISSUE

Message from Karin Blythe,
LSS Senior Director..... 2

Volunteer Spotlight:
The Interns of LSS
Refugee Services 3

Cultural Spotlight:
The Miskito People 4

Donations Update
and Thank You! 5

Upcoming Events
and Giving Opportunities..... 6

World Refugee Day
Event in Minneapolis 7

Message from Karin Blythe,

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF REFUGEE SERVICES:

We hope you have noticed the exciting and long-anticipated increase in newly-arriving refugees to our Minnesota communities in the last month. As you can see in the second quarter service statistics, formal refugee resettlement arrivals through LSS have doubled from the initial quarter of the federal fiscal year, and we expect this trend to continue. In addition to resettlement arrivals, we have also seen the continued arrival of Ukrainians seeking temporary protection as part of the Uniting for Ukraine humanitarian program. We hope you will see this as a time for you, and those you know, to increase your connection to refugee services with LSS. There are many ways to engage, and what a beautiful way to celebrate World Refugee Day, coming up in June!



REFUGEE SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS (QUARTER 2: JANUARY–MARCH 2023)

LSS REFUGEE SERVICES OUTPUTS:

- 57** Total Arrivals through LSS Resettlement Services
- 51** Immigration Applications submitted through LSS Immigration
- 43** Total Newly Enrolled in Matching Grant
- 12** Total Enrolled in Intensive Case Management
- 10** Employment Placements and Upgrades
- 93** Total Ukrainians assisted through Uniting for Ukraine



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- 56** Total Number of Volunteers
- 4** Total Number of Interns
- 1014** Total Number of Volunteer Hours
- 6** Total Number of Presentations/Community Engagements



Volunteer Spotlight: The Interns of LSS Refugee Services

We have been so fortunate to work with an incredible group of Interns the last several months. We want to thank this group for all their hard work and dedication, and we can't wait to see what comes next for the graduating seniors! Thank you, Interns! When we asked them why they were interested in internships with LSS Refugee Services, here's what they said:

Kortney Lorenzen – Immigration Services Intern.

"I have always been interested in helping people of different backgrounds and cultures. I believe immigration is an extremely important issue that needs continuous support." Kortney is attending the University of MN and working toward a Global Studies and Spanish double major and receiving minors in Anthropology and teaching English as a Second Language.

Laura Logan – Immigration Services Intern.

"I took a class freshman year about asylum seekers and other refugees and started to research foreign policy. I started to read books about immigration and individual stories and wanted to be a part of the process. A leader at LSS spoke to one of my classes, which inspired me to reach out and ask about a volunteer position. I've found it incredible working with the team and contributing to our mission." Laura is a graduating senior at Breck High School, planning to attend Georgetown University.

Leila Warsame – Resettlement and Placement Intern.

"As a former refugee child, I am passionate about supporting new immigrants because I know how hard the resettlement period is. My goal is to eventually work with refugees either in America or with the

United Nations." Leila is studying Social Work at Augsburg University.

Adrian Cerrato – Ukrainian Gap Services Intern, whose work includes securing legal documentation, federal benefits, housing, jobs, and identification during their parolee status. "As a first-generation immigrant, I've grown to admire the perseverance of migration through accounts in my family. Like any struggle, it's important to humanize the experience. That's why I've decided to intern with Refugee Services. The work isn't based entirely on theory, but real-time feelings of loss and hope. We strive to empower our clients everyday so that they feel their best in a new country and culture." Adrian is graduating this month from Augsburg University with a degree in Social Work.

Madisyn Gowans – Matching Grant Intern. "I have always been very passionate about people and helping others. My dad used to tell me that I have a big heart for anyone struggling or going through a rough time. That's why I became a social worker. I was drawn to refugee services because I didn't know a ton about refugee services and refugee policy. I thought it would be a cool experience and challenge. I also had a ton of friends in high school who were immigrants or refugees. I heard about their challenges adjusting to America and what they had experienced. Due to my friendships, I always thought about refugee services to help the community I grew up with." Madisyn graduated in April from Augsburg University with a degree in Social Work, and is becoming a Licensed Social Worker.



The LSS Refugee Services Interns pictured left to right: Kortney Lorenzen, Laura Logan, Adrian Cerrato, Madisyn Gowans. Not pictured: Leila Warsame.

Cultural Spotlight: Nicaragua/Honduras — The Miskito People

The Miskito are a diverse indigenous group that live along the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras. They have a distinct culture and language, which sets them apart from other indigenous groups in the region. The Miskito are renowned for their rich cultural heritage, which includes music, dance, art, and storytelling.

One of the most notable aspects of Miskito culture is their music. An important traditional Miskito instrument is the mirliton, a kazoo-like instrument which is made from bat wings, reeds, and beeswax. It is typically played by male traditional healers as part of healing rituals.

The Miskito have also have distinctive styles of music that heavily use the kitar (a guitar derived instrument with fewer strings), marimba (a wooden percussion instrument that is extremely popular throughout the region and is the national instrument of Nicaragua), and percussive scrapers. The music is often accompanied by singing and dancing and is an integral part of Miskito life and culture.

Another important aspect of Miskito culture is their art. The Miskito are skilled weavers and are known for their intricate and colorful textiles. Traditionally, cloth was made from tree bark, but today many types of fabric are used. Miskito textiles are highly prized and are often used in traditional ceremonies, festivals, and are sought after by tourists. In addition to textiles, the Miskito also create pottery, wood carvings, and many other forms of artwork.

The Miskito also have a vast collection of myths, legends, and folktales that have been passed down through generations. These stories often feature people, animals, and spirits, and are used to teach important values and morals. One of the reoccurring characters in Miskito stories is a trickster rabbit called Bangbang who often outsmarts characters who are much bigger and stronger than he is.

Sources:

McGoffin, E. C. (2016). *Ghost Songs: The Effects of an Urban Natural Disaster on National Identity In Nicaragua* (Publication No. 10163341) [Master's Thesis, University of Louisiana at Lafayette]. ProQuest.

Pineda, B. L. (2006). *Shipwrecked identities navigating race on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast*. Rutgers University Press.

Robles, F. (2016, October 17). Nicaragua dispute over indigenous land erupts in wave of killings. *The New York Times*. Retrieved April 28, 2023.



A marimba performance in Nicaragua.

In recent years, the Miskito have faced heavy discrimination and marginalization. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Miskito people were subjected to forced labor and land expropriation by colonial powers. In the 1980s, the Miskito people were caught in the crossfire of the Contra War, a conflict between the Nicaraguan government and US-backed rebels. Many Miskito fled to Honduras to escape the violence, while others remained in Nicaragua and fought for their rights. Today, the Miskito continue to face challenges, including discrimination, poverty, lack of access to healthcare and education, and threats to their land and resources. These threats have forced many to become refugees in countries like the United States.



A Miskito woman wearing traditional clothing made from tree bark.

Despite these challenges, the Miskito people remain resilient and continue to preserve their culture and traditions. Through their language, music, art, stories, and spirituality, the Miskito people have created a cultural heritage that is unique and vibrant, and that continues to inspire and captivate people around the world.

A Huge Thank-You for Donations

In mid-March, we put out this call: “We need help finding furniture and household supplies for nine families arriving in the next several weeks!” Well, that number “9” quickly expanded to about 20 households arriving by the beginning of May. And this community – this network of incredibly giving and generous people – truly stepped up to that call.

THANK YOU. Thank you so much for responding to our call for help, and for sharing our need within your own networks. We have been overwhelmed in the absolutely best way possible, and this community continues to bring our team hope as we have seen how Minnesotans are willing to open their arms and say to newly arriving refugees, “You are welcome here. You belong here.”

NUMBERS FROM THE DONATIONS COLLECTED BETWEEN MARCH 15–APRIL 30:

- Number of Newly-Arrived Individuals: **66**
- Homes Set Up: **10**
- Number of donors & volunteers who have emailed us to offer their help (estimated): **106**
- In-Kind Donation Valuations (estimated): **Over \$38,400**
- Number of items purchased from Target Registry: **169**



From left to right: Volunteers Maureen Sather, Julie Wodicka, Kathryn Lien, and Carol Stehly from St. Mary of the Lake in White Bear Lake. In about two weeks, their parish gathered the supplies for over 75 cleaning kits. Here they are pictured as they work to organize their community's generous donations.



Furniture collected from three different donors comes together into a cozy living space for a newly-arrived family of six.

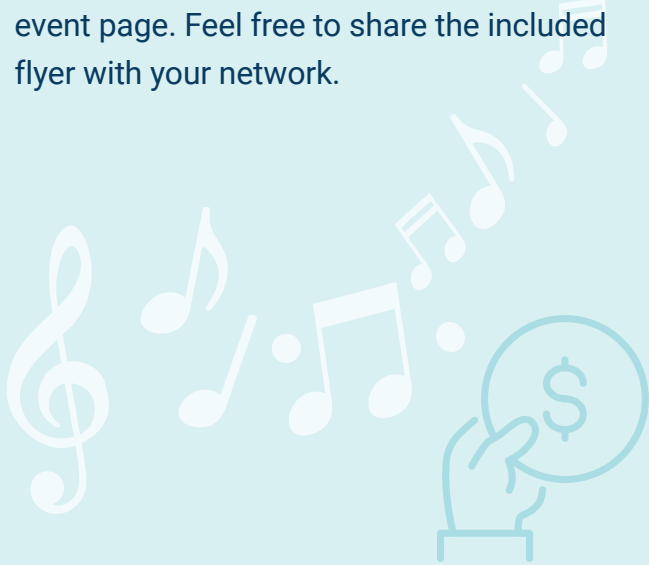


Upcoming Events:

WORLD REFUGEE DAY FUNDRAISER EVENT

Tuesday, June 13 – Center for Changing Lives, 2400 Park Avenue, Minneapolis; Doors open at 6:30 pm.

You are invited to an evening of music, reflection, and action with the LSS Refugee Services community! This interactive event will provide an opportunity to connect and learn through song, storytelling, and art, while also providing space to donate, learn about advocacy, and explore other ways to support new arrivals in Minnesota. Light refreshments will be served. To find out more and RSVP, please visit our [Eventbrite](#) event page. Feel free to share the included flyer with your network.



Not on our email list yet? Sign up to receive our next e-newsletter today!

How to Donate:

- **In Kind:**

Please bring to The Center for Changing Lives at 2400 Park Ave South in Minneapolis. Drop off hours are:

Monday: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

- **Target Registry:**

We have a **registry with Target!** Get things sent directly to our office!

- **Financial Donations:**

Visit donate.lssmn.org/resettlement, or send us a check to 2485 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, Attn: Refugee Services.

Contact Us:

Kara Barkman

Volunteer Facilitator

Kara.Barkman@lssmn.org | 612.400.9647

Contact for: Donations

Micah Sherwin

Volunteer Facilitator

Micah.Sherwin@lssmn.org | 612.879.5267

Contact for: Community Connections

Lynn Mullin

Volunteer Program Coordinator

Lynn.Mullin@lssmn.org | 612.470.8806

Contact for: Everything Else!

lssmn.org

 LSS Refugee Services of Minnesota

World Refugee Day Fundraiser

JOIN US IN BUILDING COMMUNITY AND INSPIRING HOPE!

June 13th, 2023

Center for Changing Lives

2400 Park Ave S, Minneapolis

Doors open at 6:30 p.m.



Art, Music, & Storytelling

Vendors

Tea & Treats

Opportunities for Action

SUGGESTED DONATION UPON ENTRY: \$30

**ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE WORK OF
LSS REFUGEE SERVICES**

QUESTIONS? EMAIL LYNN.MULLIN@LSSMN.ORG