

# 2020 Year in Review



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## Perseverance and Hope

### After a difficult year, perseverance and hope remain

2020 was a challenging year for all of us. A global health crisis, a struggling world economy, and new constraints on work, school, business, travel, worship, and immigration put unforeseen pressure on all Americans, especially refugees and other immigrants, many of whom were just starting their lives here in the United States.

Our neighbors in vulnerable situations suddenly found it more difficult to find jobs, learn English, care for family members, enroll in school, find community support, maintain mental health, attain legal status, and more. As they have faced these challenges, they have done so with perseverance and determination. In days that have often felt dark, there have been so many stories of hope. With your support, families continue to press forward with life amidst uncertainty.

We want to share some of these stories with you. In this “Year in Review,” you’ll see a glimpse of the incredible impact immigrants are making as essential workers in the fight against COVID-19. You’ll read about the large number of people who have found hope through just-in-time support and financial assistance, and others who persist in learning English despite technology obstacles.

We see in you, our partners, this same perseverance and hope. Thank you for journeying with immigrant and refugee families this year, and helping to pave the way ahead with hope. Together in this spirit, we will continue to create communities of welcome all across Chicagoland.

## Perseverance: The Work Continues



Susan Sperry



# A Letter from the Executive Director

When the clock changed from 2020 to 2021, I had a brief thought that we could leave all the ugly of 2020 behind and start new, or at least return to “normal” life. Perhaps you did, too?

But the truth is that many of our challenging realities remain the same as we progress through 2021. And yet, we know the incredible perseverance and hope that strengthened us throughout the last year remains and continues to grow.

This past year, the services you supported through World Relief were more vital than ever to help our neighbors persevere through job loss, illness, remote learning, loss of income, anxiety, and countless other challenges.

During times of national division and public health inequity, your investment has sent a message of welcome, a reminder that all people are made in God’s image. Your partnership made possible relief efforts such as emergency financial support and health education outreach, and countless churches responded to this moment, mobilizing food donations and volunteers through World Relief.

Even as we have been separated by distance and only connected through computer screens, countless volunteers have partnered with immigrants virtually to practice English, prepare for new careers, tutor youth, and just be present with each other. You have made

it possible for people to come together in relationship at this critical time.

Thank you for being a part of such incredible impact this year. You have helped countless families persevere, and your partnership has ignited hope. On behalf of all of us at World Relief, thank you for joining with us in the story of 2020. May perseverance and hope remain in all of us in 2021.

Serving Together,

A handwritten signature of Susan Sperry in black ink.

Susan Sperry  
Executive Director

Read more stories of  
impact online on our blog.

Visit our website at: [chicagoland.worldrelief.org](https://chicagoland.worldrelief.org)  
Follow us on social media: @wrchicagoland



# A New Way to Help Students

Yoga during Homework Club helps high school students succeed during the pandemic

For high school students, Physical Education (P.E.) activities and requirements are not conducive for those living in apartment buildings, with large groups of people, or on busy streets. Most of the English Learners (EL) population in Aurora fit into at least one of those categories, and as a result many of them are failing P.E.

Together with the EL department at West High, a creative way was developed to address this issue during Homework Club. Brittany Hetzel, a World Relief staff member, is a certified yoga instructor. If students participate in her yoga class for one hour a week during Homework Club, they will receive credit for P.E.

The response? Students are loving it. While this was an unexpected turn for Homework Club this year, we are grateful for the creativity of our partners, volunteers, and staff to provide a welcoming space for high school students in the midst of a remarkably challenging year.

Visit our new website.  
Scan the QR code.



Volunteer with World Relief  
Learn how on page 9

# Responding to the Pandemic



We were able to provide more than \$655k in direct emergency assistance in 2020, thanks to donors and volunteers like you.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many daunting challenges for refugees and other immigrants this past year. Your partnership enabled World Relief to come alongside countless families and individuals during this challenging time. Below are three crucial ways we responded.

## 1. Leveraged Remote Technologies

As the world went from in-person to virtual overnight, many generous partners helped World Relief staff and many immigrants secure the technology needed to transition programs from in-person to virtual within a month of the pandemic’s initial closures. Platforms such as Facebook, Zoom, and WhatsApp, along with phone and text, became the pathways for refugees & immigrants to continue connecting with World Relief staff and volunteers. While not ideal, these remote connections created the pathways for vital services to continue uninterrupted.

## 2. Leaned on Church Partners and Volunteers

Even during a time of great discomfort and uncertainty, World Relief church partners and volunteers stood strong as the foundation for our work and the reason our mission is possible. More than 1,000 volunteers served virtually, and more than 300 churches partnered to provide aid, raise awareness, or mobilize their congregations. One prime example of this vital support was in the multi-church commitment to deliver food and supplies to immigrant families in need last summer.

## 3. Provided Direct Emergency Assistance

Through many generous public and private partners, World Relief was able to provide over \$655,000 in financial relief to immigrant families in need throughout Chicagoland. This relief helped with rent payments, financial emergencies, career trainings to re-enter the workforce, DACA renewal application fees, and other basic needs.

# Who We Served in 2020

6800+  
Immigrants

Who came from  
122  
Countries



# 500+

197

**\$273k**

## To help 227 households with rent & utilities

For many refugees and immigrants, breaking news in the United States can lead to confusion, fear, and anxiety. Language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of access to trustworthy news sources can make it incredibly difficult for an immigrant to understand the implications of what they've read, heard, or viewed. This is especially troublesome when the news has a direct impact on their lives or the lives of their families. World Relief has always made it a priority to inform our clients of relevant news and to be a source for further explanation or context. This past year, we helped clients navigate information on COVID-19, DACA, the 2020 census, an election season, and more. Within days of the first COVID-19 lockdowns, we built and went live with a COVID-19 information web page, translated into multiple languages.

## As needs increased, so did support

The United States began 2020 with a historically low refugee resettlement goal. By the end of March, refugee resettlement had come to a complete halt after the spreading pandemic made travel to and from the U.S. nearly impossible. Thankfully, these restrictions changed in July and a small number of refugees began to be admitted to the U.S. again. World Relief was ready to welcome them.

While the number of new refugees remained low, the needs among refugees & immigrants in our communities rose, and World Relief Chicago served more people in 2020 (over 6,800) than in recent history.

When people think of World Relief, they often think about the life-changing impact of refugee resettlement. Yet this is only part of the story. **World Relief Chicagoland offices also**

serve immigrants who have already relocated to the United States and now seek services like English language learning, job counseling, citizenship assistance, or legal aid.

Throughout the year, thousands of refugees and immigrants reached out to World Relief for vital services, including support for basic needs & help navigating U.S. systems. As with so many people, the pandemic had interrupted dreams and created unforeseen obstacles. World Relief came alongside them to navigate these barriers.

**\$655k**

## In COVID-19 Relief Provided



Having young children can be a challenging season of life for anyone, especially with the added struggle of living in a new culture with language barriers and social divides. When compounded by loss of income and lack of resources caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the families served through World Relief have faced significant challenges this year.

For the winter season, World Relief invited community partners to collect or donate children's hats, gloves, and scarves as part of a

winter clothing drive. The items would be paired with a winter coat and would then be distributed to refugee and immigrant children.

In response, a local Girl Scout made the clothing drive part of her annual service project and helped collect enough hats, gloves, and scarves for more than 100 children.

Thanks to this generous outpouring of support from the Girl Scout, along with many other church groups and volunteers, the

quantity of donations exceeded World Relief's highest expectations. Winter hats, gloves, scarves, and coats were given to more than a dozen infants, two dozen toddlers, and one hundred kids ages 3-5, totalling over 140 children served!

Thanks to many volunteers, the majority of the clothing donations were paired with handwritten cards that were then given to the children and their families as a way to help encourage and show solidarity during the holidays.

WORLD RELIEF

# ENGLISH CLASS ONLINE!



## Virtual English Classrooms



COVID-19 didn't stop World Relief English classes. Thanks to the hard work of department heads, teachers, and volunteer tutors, classrooms were moved online within weeks of the pandemic lockdowns. To help students adapt to their new remote learning realities, teachers and tutors conducted online tutorials and provided direct support over phone, email, and text.

**Learn more about English Classes.**  
**Scan the QR code.**



In response to the pandemic, we offered a total of **47 English classes** completely online.



**virtual classroom meetings**  
reuniones de video en línea  
فصول عبر الكمبيوتر  
spotkania wideo online

**homework**  
deberes  
واجبات المنزلية  
Praca domowa



## Learning English is the First Step

**Thanks to World Relief English classes, refugee twin sisters were able to secure dream jobs in the medical field. They now work on the front lines against the pandemic.**

After fleeing religious persecution in Iran, refugee twin sisters, Hana and Sona, quickly secured their first jobs stateside as factory workers for Home Depot. But despite their good work performance and high praise from their supervisor, the sisters were eventually let go from their jobs because neither spoke English well enough.

"Our supervisor liked our work," says Sona, "But we couldn't pass our English test."

That's when a World Relief volunteer and good friend to the sisters decided to help out by referring Hana and Sona to World Relief Chicagoland's English language learning classes. The sisters eagerly enrolled and then worked tirelessly to learn the material.

"We were working days and nights to learn English," says Sona. "I was sleeping 2-3 hours per day just so I could have enough time to improve."

After years of hard work, Sona and Hana learned the English necessary to return to school and pursue their dreams of working in the medical field.

Sona now works as a respiratory therapist, and Hana works as a phlebotomist. They both work with COVID-19 patients daily.

According to the sisters, many more refugees and immigrants will achieve their dreams in the United States if given the same chance to learn.

"We need more free English classes like the ones at World Relief," the sisters explain. "It's hard to find free classes, even if you're willing to attend class after work hours. More classes need to be available for refugees. With more English classes available, refugees are more likely to be a success. Their success will then motivate others who are happy to see their example. But learning English is the first step. It's always the first step."



## English Learning in 2020

# 445

Learned English through  
World Relief's Online Classes

# 2100+

Hours of English Tutoring  
Provided Virtually



# Helping Clients Save

In 2020, World Relief Chicagoland relaunched the Individual Development Account (IDA) Program. The program helps refugees and asylees save towards an important life goal by matching dollar-for-dollar the money they save, plus providing financial education along the way. Participants in the program have used the money saved to buy a home, start a business, further their education, and more. According to many participants, their goals wouldn't have been possible without the help of the program.



A packed house for the first IDA Program seminar (pre-COVID)

# The Tun Family's Dream Comes True



Thanks to hard work, financial planning, and the World Relief IDA Savings Program, the Tun family (pictured left) successfully closed on their first home in early October 2020. While part of the program, the family saved \$4,000 in a very short time. They also completed over 46 hours of financial education, including home buyer education and housing counseling with World Relief's partner HOME DuPage.

"Without the IDA program and World Relief's help, we would not have been able to buy a home so fast," the couple explained. "The program was very helpful for us. We wished to have our son's first birthday in our new home and now it's possible. We have a big yard, and we can make a playground for our son. Thanks to World Relief and the IDA Savings Program, we achieved our goal."

649

Received Job Counseling

247

Different Companies Hired  
World Relief Clients

Give career path-  
ways to refugees  
and immigrants.  
Scan the QR code.

# Creating Career Pathways

New training programs led to significant wage increases in 2020



55 immigrants recieved job training grants in IT, health sciences, and CNC machining

Working to provide necessary job training for refugees and other immigrants took on new importance and urgency in 2020. COVID-19 job loss had disproportionately affected industries that employ the highest percentage of immigrants (e.g. hospitality). In response, World Relief's employment team partnered with businesses to secure employment for new immigrant job seekers, as well as for individuals who suddenly found themselves unemployed or under-employed due to the pandemic. Thanks to new initiatives like the Career Pathways program, job seekers were given the training necessary to find work for the first time, or once again. Last year, suburban participants in the Career Pathways program secured jobs at an average wage of \$16.56 per hour, and the top 20% of placements averaged over \$40k per year—a 12.6% increase from 2019. World Relief Chicagoland provided job counseling to 649 clients, 55 of which received more than \$355k in grants for training in IT, health sciences, and CNC manufacturing.

# Legal Status = Stability

To obtain the right to work, become legal residents, and reunite with family members, immigrants and refugees must navigate the complex US immigration system—a difficult process, even for native English speakers. To help them on this journey, World Relief's nationally accredited Immigration Legal Services program provides legal consultations and case representation for thousands of immigration cases each year, some of which can take years to be decided. At the same time, World Relief and its partners advocate for just immigration policies that respect both the dignity of all human beings and the needs of our country and community.



## On His Way



For one young man who is working with World Relief's legal team, DACA will help him realize his dreams of going to college. This exceptional young man has worked hard in High School to be inducted into the National Honors Society, National English Honors Society, and the National World Language Honors Society. He will soon be on his way to get a degree in graphic design. Playing football and wrestling throughout high school, he is the oldest of three siblings and has family in his home country he hopes to see again.

**Learn more about  
our legal work.**

**Scan the QR code.**



Immigration Legal Services continued to provide info sessions for DACA and citizenship in 2020 via webinars.

## Legal Services Milestones

# 2753

Received Legal Assistance

# 470

Became U.S. Citizens



Several members of World Relief Chicagoland's Immigration Legal Services (ILS) team

## What Happened with DACA?

**New Federal rulings keep the vital program going**

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is a United States immigration policy that provides a temporary status for some eligible individuals—also known as Dreamers—who were brought to the U.S. as children. Once they receive DACA, these young adults receive a renewable two-year period of protection from deportation and become eligible for a work permit in the U.S.

On September 5, 2017, the U.S. government announced that it would end the program. Then on June 20, 2020, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5–4 decision to continue the program, and on July 28, the previous administration filed a memorandum against the ruling. This proved to be an incredibly

frightening and anxiety producing time for many DACA recipients and their families. So, to help ease those feelings of uncertainty and fear, World Relief Chicagoland's ILS department remained steadfast in their support and diligently provided DACA updates via multiple platforms and in multiple languages for most sessions.

On January 21, 2021, President Biden signed an Executive Order that protected and restored the DACA program to the original 2012 version. While DACA remains available now, these Dreamers still await a legislative solution that will allow them to fully contribute to the country they call their home.





# Empowering Churches

## Together, we create communities of welcome

World Relief partners with churches through discipleship and advocacy, relationships and community building, and vital service provision.

### Testimonial from **Christ Church of Oak Brook**

“Scripture makes clear God’s heart for immigrants and refugees, and no one takes that more seriously than World Relief. During a year of widespread isolation and breakdown, World Relief adapted quickly to keep the people they serve connected and cared for. For many of our nation’s newcomers, their very first taste of America and of Christ are the love and care that World Relief provides. And that is a very good thing.”

### Testimonial from **Chapelstreet Church**

“World Relief has grown my heart for immigrants that are right in our neighborhoods. My favorite activity occurred this past summer when I hosted a new Nepali pastor and his family for a socially-distanced lunch on my back porch. I was so fortunate to welcome them into the neighborhood. I’m thankful for World Relief’s guidance for pastors like myself who are working to lead their congregations toward welcoming immigrants to our neighborhoods, and to the Body of Christ.”

## Christ’s Love

### Testimonial from **Church of the Resurrection**

“We partner with World Relief because their vision echoes our own: to model Jesus’s love and service to the most vulnerable among us. We are so glad to contribute, in small ways, to World Relief’s vision of welcoming our neighbors as ourselves, especially in times of crisis. Moved by a desire to provide relief over the winter months, our congregation generously donated household items, coats, and funds for asylum seekers, that we may welcome and support those who might otherwise feel alienated in our communities. We know that World Relief has worked tirelessly to serve their clients through all the challenges of this year, and we are honored to support the organization.”



**Jesus House** continues to mobilize support in response to the pandemic

## Mission Mobilization

### World Relief church partners put mission into action

Jesus House Chicago Church has been a blessing to the people who have come to World Relief for assistance both before and during the pandemic. Last summer, Jesus House donated crates of food to World Relief’s Chicago office to be distributed to refugee and immigrant families in need during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

World Relief Chicagoland’s church and volunteer engagement teams then coordinated the distribution, packaging, and delivery of the generously donated items to families across the city. And thanks to the dozens of volunteers who braved the pandemic to safely deliver these much needed items to recipient doorsteps, many refugees and immigrants—including some who were elderly, infirm, or at high-risk for COVID-19 complications—received necessary aid without leaving the safety of their own homes.

According to Jesus House’s Pastor, Emmanuel Oladipo, “It’s a serious time of need, and as a church, we are responsible for developing our community, and one way to do that is to provide support.”

Start a conversation  
about mobilizing your  
church or organization  
**Scan the QR Code**







Volunteer Health Advocate, **Angela Jalloh**

# Building Health

## From refugee to volunteer health advocate

Angela Jalloh has dedicated the last twenty years to paying forward the same kindness that she received as a newly arrived refugee to the United States two decades ago. As both a Registered Nurse and a World Relief Volunteer Health Advocate, Angela now uses her medical expertise to provide professional and compassionate support to refugees and other immigrants in need of health assistance.

“The good World Relief does is endless,” Angela explains. “They have changed the lives of so many people that are going through so much personal transition. The employees are so dedicated, and so caring, and they really want to make the world a better place.”

In her role as a Volunteer Health Advocate, Angela works hard to help immigrant patients overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of a proper diagnosis, including language barriers, patient anxieties, and confusing financial obligations.

“I am there to help the patient comprehend,” says Angela.

“It’s such a great feeling to have a positive impact on someone else’s life. In my mind, it’s what we should all be doing. We should all care for each other. I wish I could do more. I just want to fix all the problems, but I know that everything takes time. But we’ll get there. We’ll get there.”

## The Volunteer Experience Goes Remote

### In response to the pandemic, volunteer training and support went digital

World Relief Chicagoland offers a variety of volunteer opportunities that exist across seven essential program areas, including English language learning, children and youth support, citizenship assistance, career mentoring, and more. But when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Chicagoland region to work remotely, our volunteer engagement team had to get creative in order to continue offering these services during lockdowns and social distancing. In response, the team transformed these volunteer opportunities into virtual opportunities available online, meaning volunteers could train for their role via the internet and then assist their refugee and immigrant neighbors from the safety of their own homes by using new teleconferencing tools. The best part: the people they serve would continue to benefit from the vital support during a time in which many need it most. Even with this change to the volunteer experience, more than 1,000 people have served alongside immigrants and refugees this year.



# 350

Churches Partnered



# 1035

Volunteers Served in 2020



# 365

New Volunteers

## Would you like to volunteer?

Join us to walk alongside refugees and immigrants in your community

From English classes and citizenship clinics to mentorship and tutoring after school, there are so many ways to build relationships and show welcome to refugees and immigrants in your community. Bring your gifts, abilities, and interests, and World Relief will help you use them to walk alongside these families and individuals as they rebuild their lives in the Chicago region.

To learn more, visit: [chicagoland.worldrelief.org/volunteer](https://chicagoland.worldrelief.org/volunteer)

Apply Now  
Scan the QR Code




# Thank You!

Through your partnership, over 6,800 refugees and immigrants in vulnerable situations had access to vital services they needed in 2020. Your trust and investment in this work created the environment for welcoming and just communities to form despite the limits caused by COVID-19. Your partnership led to over 1.8 million in private support, exceeding the budgeted amount for last fiscal year. Your generosity is making a difference in our community at this critical time. Thank you for your trust, financial partnership, and the impact you are having on our immigrant neighbors!



## We Bring You this Broadcast



The 2nd Annual Global Gala was scheduled to take place in April of 2020, but with only a few weeks to go before the event, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened to the point of statewide closures. An in-person event was no longer a possibility. But rather than shut down the event completely, World Relief Chicagoland's Development Team worked tirelessly to reinvent the gala for the video conference age.

Available to stream live on Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube, the Virtual Global Gala attracted hundreds of viewers from multiple states, and included inspiring stories and performances from refugee speakers and musicians. Keynote speaker, Mawi Asgedom, and refugee singer/songwriter, Ephraim Bugumba, were a few of the highlights from a magnificent evening.

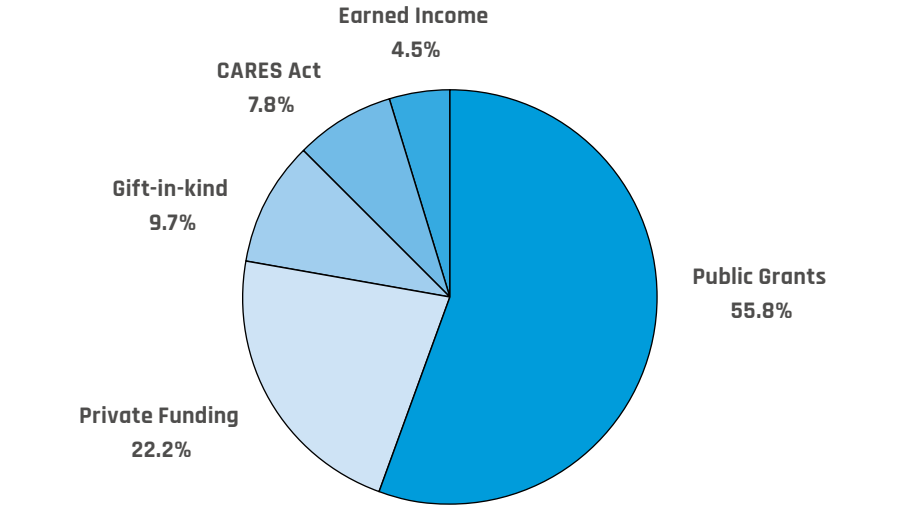
Thanks to the many who donated, World Relief Chicagoland raised \$168,700 from the event.

Thanks to generous donors, World Relief raised **\$168,700** during the 2020 Global Gala.

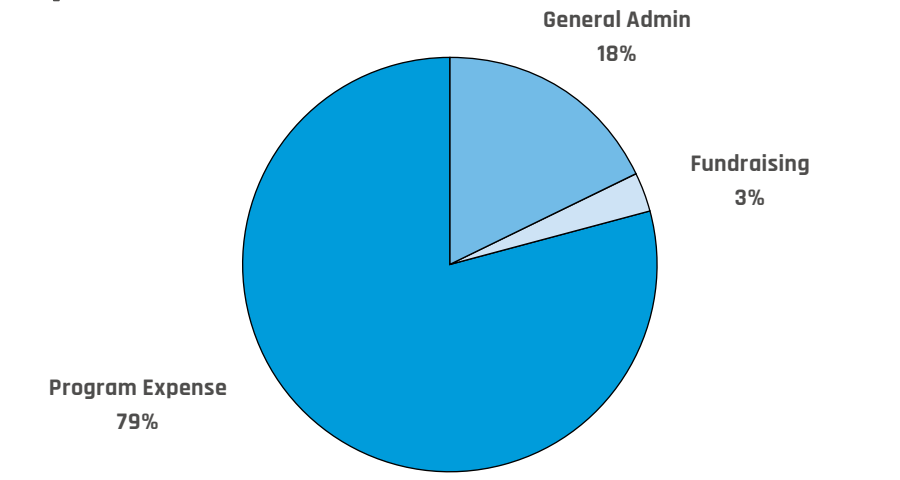
## Fiscal Year 2020



### Income



### Expenses



# Testimonials

## A few words from refugees and immigrants who you helped in 2020

“If I know someone who is in a problem like me, I want to show them to World Relief. World Relief is the right place for immigrants. I am very excited about the future because now I am very comfortable to live in the United States, to live in Chicago. Thank you to the partners of World Relief!

Subira, World Relief Client, Chicago Location

“Thank you to every person that is involved with World Relief activities, because you are the ones that transform lives. World Relief staff cannot do it in absence of volunteers, partners, and everyone who is willing to donate to help immigrants and refugees. Without your support, I could not be where I am now. Thank you!”

Jerome, Former World Relief Client, Aurora Location

“World Relief Immigration Legal Services was with me every step of the way on my journey to becoming a United States citizen. They were always so helpful, and it was a real pleasure working with them to achieve my dream. Thank you to the wonderful lawyers. Thank you for all the emails, phone calls, and consultations. Thank you for all your advice. You have been a real blessing to my family and me.”

Jesus, World Relief Client, DuPage Location

### Thank You, Foundation Partners

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| • Andrew & Alice Fischer Charitable Trust      | • Charitable Fund                             | • Collaborative                            |
| • Chicago Bar Foundation                       | • Fox Valley Grantmakers                      | • Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois           |
| • Chicago Community COVID-19 Response Fund     | • COVID-19 Response Fund                      | • NKC Family Foundation                    |
| • Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley | • G. Carl Ball Family Foundation              | • Tyndale House Foundation                 |
| • DuPage Foundation                            | • Gerald A. & Karen A. Kolschowsky Foundation | • Walder Foundation                        |
| • DuPage Medical Group                         | • Glen Ellyn Infant Welfare Society           | • Wheaton Franciscan Sisters Ministry Fund |
|  | • Illinois Bar Foundation                     | • W.P. & H.B. White Foundation             |
|  | • Illinois Immigration Funders                |  |

## Help create change that lasts

### There are many ways to walk alongside our immigrant friends and neighbors

World Relief Chicagoland is working to create “change that lasts” for refugees and other immigrants in Illinois, and we can always use more help. World Relief’s mission depends on the partnership of volunteers, churches, employers, schools, communities, businesses, foundations, and individual donors. Our work would not be possible without all these groups working together. So, as you can see, there is no one way to help. There is no one way to walk alongside our immigrant friends and neighbors. That choice is up to you.

To learn more, visit: [chicagoland.worldrelief.org](http://chicagoland.worldrelief.org) and choose one of the many options under the menu selection “Get Involved”







world relief   
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