

AUGUST 2021

Partner Update

Foundations Newsletter



TOGETHER, WE ARE BUILDING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Beginning in March 2020, you heard how COVID-19 was threatening to devastate some of Chicago's most vulnerable communities. In the last year and a half, we have seen remarkable resilience, innovation, and creativity from both the immigrants and refugees World Relief Chicagoland serves and our own staff and supporters.

Together, we have served more than 6,800 people in 2021.

You Made an Impact Amid a Crisis

A strong network of foundation partners, volunteers, and other supporters enabled World Relief Chicagoland to respond to vulnerabilities brought by COVID-19. Despite challenges, partners like you equipped World Relief to proactively implement programs to address real needs and help immigrant and refugee families as they become integrated, contributing members of their communities here in Chicagoland.

world relief 
CHICAGOLAND

Newsletter Highlights

A Note from the
Executive Director

Collaboration and
Innovation

Your Impact

The Situation in
Afghanistan

Looking to What's
Ahead



COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

As an organization, World Relief Chicagoland prizes collaboration with partners and finding innovative ways to provide services. The vulnerable situation of many World Relief clients means that just one unexpected event, like a sudden job loss, can be catastrophic to a family's well-being.

Your partnership with World Relief provides services that prevent a hazard from devolving into a disaster – and allows agile, responsive service provision that uses virtual tools to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, immigration legal services, education support to children, housing and employment services, and other immigrant family services amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Recent Successes

No-Contact Document Slot:

The immigration legal services department continued vital legal support by creating a contactless document drop off slot at the DuPage office, allowing clients to complete paperwork and receive information in a COVID-safe way.

Virtual Conversation Cafes:

When social distancing keeps clients from interacting with a broader community or improving their English skills, Zoom conversation cafes pair English language learners with volunteers to practice conversational skills by discussing topics like family, favorite food, and hobbies.

Career Services:

When clients lost jobs due to the pandemic, World Relief helped 170 individuals apply for and maintain unemployment benefits while looking for new employment opportunities.

Job Placement:

Relationships with more than 247 local employers are connecting businesses in need of staff with clients who participate in job readiness, skill development, resume and interview preparation, and job placement activities.

A Message from the Executive Director

Rebuilding welcoming communities is work that must be done together. As we look forward to continuing our programs and increasing our refugee resettlement this year, I am excited to introduce Carrie Woodward as someone dedicated to engaging with World Relief Chicagoland's foundation partners. She will build on our long-standing relationships and facilitate new ways for you to connect with World Relief so you see the impact you are making. Thank you for helping build welcoming communities at a time when it's so greatly needed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan".



SUSAN SPERRY
Executive Director
World Relief Chicagoland

YOUR IMPACT

The communities that welcome immigrants see economic and social impacts that last far into the future. You help create that future by supporting program delivery at World Relief – where we want to see every immigrant and refugee overcome barriers and reach their fullest potential.

A recent example of this is Aisha, a young woman and Afghan refugee who experienced immense trauma and suffering before fleeing her home in Afghanistan. Aisha arrived in the United States at eight years old and immediately dedicated herself to studying and excelling in school. This past year was one of her most important years yet: as an 8th grader, Aisha had the opportunity to apply for college preparatory schools. Over the course of the year, World Relief provided Aisha with tutoring and homework help and walked alongside her through the entire high school application process. This spring, Aisha found out that she was accepted to every school she applied to! In the fall, Aisha will begin high school on scholarship at the prestigious Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.

World Relief Chicagoland's education support and relationships formed in the youth mentorship program can be life-changing for young people as they discern their life goals, develop skills, and prepare for future education and careers, especially after moving to a new country and experiencing traumatic life events. Refugee and immigrant young people like Aisha, who are in vulnerable situations, gain education support and mentors who walk alongside them as they work hard to seize a brighter future.

Phillips Academy is one of America's most competitive high schools and has a long list of notable alumni, including two U.S. presidents, five Nobel laureates, and six Medal of Honor recipients. Aisha might be next!

Your investment is creating opportunities that will impact generations.

When equipped to overcome obstacles, immigrants are responsible for an outsized share of the most life-changing innovations in the United States – from business to scientific research.

- According to a report from the American Economic Association, 65% of recently awarded Nobel Prizes have gone to U.S.-based researchers, and nearly half of those recipients were born abroad.
- 2017 research from the Center for American Entrepreneurship showed that 57% of the top 35 Fortune 500 companies were founded or co-founded by immigrants or their children.

Immigrants and their children are responsible for a disproportionately large percentage of:

- Successful businesses founded
- Patents registered
- Scientific discoveries and breakthroughs





LOOKING FORWARD

Like the COVID-19 reports you received over the last year, future Partner Updates will describe challenges at a local level, share stories of the people at the heart of what we do, and keep you informed of World Relief's programs serving refugees and immigrants with holistic services.

World Relief Chicagoland is preparing to welcome over 750 refugee arrivals over the course of the 2022 fiscal year beginning this October. We have the expertise to serve these new arrivals in addition to non-refugee immigrants and asylum seekers, but we also want to grow services offered to all immigrants. It is important that we innovate, provide impactful services, and successfully operate as one of only nine resettlement agencies in the United States.

Afghan Refugee Response

The current situation in Afghanistan has brought World Relief's expertise as a refugee resettlement organization into sharp focus. As you have likely seen on the news and in official reports, as men, women, and children flee Afghanistan, the needs are growing. World Relief is positioned to respond effectively, but the details of that response will depend on a number of external factors.

Volunteers, churches, and partners like you equipped World Relief to respond to COVID-19, and you are enabling us to adapt quickly to the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. That support is key to resettling the Afghan families expected in months to come. World Relief is actively engaged in planning and preparing, and you can expect future updates as the situation evolves. There will be a significant need for housing assistance, education and employment support, and mental health care.

Your support is sustaining vital programs that meet needs in refugee and immigrant communities and will serve people from Afghanistan in important ways. Thank you. Together, we can build welcoming communities.

Please reach out to Carrie Woodward (cwoodward@wr.org) if you would like to learn more about helping refugees from Afghanistan.

Connect

Visit our Foundation Partners page online at chicagoland.worldrelief.org/partner-updates to watch partners welcome immigrant and refugee neighbors to their communities. Click the link above or scan the QR code with your phone camera.

We want to keep you in the loop about World Relief Chicagoland and the impact you are making, but we also want to hear from you!

CARRIE WOODWARD

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