



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**World Relief Announces Opening of New Office in Whatcom County**

**BELLINGHAM, Wash.** – World Relief has announced the opening of a new office in Whatcom County, Washington, one of several new offices slated to open around the country in the coming months to serve the refugee community.

World Relief's Whatcom County location, approved by the State Department in mid-September, currently has one professional staff member: **resettlement manager Steven Shetterly**. The office's focus at present is on refugee reception and placement, securing housing, helping children get into school and offering employment aid. World Relief hopes to continue to expand its services throughout Western Washington in the years to come.

"World Relief is excited to launch the Whatcom County office in concert with the community. We have been welcoming, rooting and empowering refugees and immigrants throughout the community for 40 years in Western Washington and are excited to extend our reach to Whatcom County," **said World Relief Seattle executive director Chitra Hanstad**. "As we have seen here in King County, refugees and immigrants bring their culture and innovation to our local community and economy. We look forward to this partnership and to building a thriving community together."

World Relief's Whatcom County office began as a core group of volunteers who were eager to see more locations open in their region. Shetterly coordinated with Hanstad and World Relief vice president of U.S. programs Jennifer Foy, who both came alongside Shetterly and the volunteer group at large to facilitate World Relief's expansion into Whatcom County with their experience and resources.

"I have been thrilled to see the amount of local support shown for the opening of this office, from community organizations and faith groups to local government and the many individuals who have reached out to offer help and support. I'm convinced that Whatcom County has the ability to serve as a place of welcome and refuge for families fleeing violence and persecution, and that ultimately we will be a stronger community because of it," **said Shetterly**.

More than [4,000](#) Afghans arrived in Washington state with special immigrant visas from 2010 to 2020, and there are many more to come from various countries. World Relief's further expansion in Western Washington, starting in Whatcom, will broaden the structure of work previously being done by the organization in neighboring regions and increase its capacity to serve the refugee community within a 100-mile radius of the site.



World Relief's Whatcom County location will begin receiving arrivals in November. The office expects to receive 15 arrivals before the end of 2021 and plans on resettling a total of 75 throughout the remainder of the federal fiscal year. The biggest needs are finding available and affordable housing and financial funding to hire additional staff to hire staff who will be ready to welcome newcomers with excellence.

"Refugees bring their courage, creativity and resilience in the face of hardship, and we will benefit from welcoming them into our community," **said Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu.** "We look forward to providing an opportunity for these families to thrive!"

To learn more about World Relief's work in Whatcom County and Western Washington and how you can financially support, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/whatcomrefugees>.

### **About World Relief**

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world's greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we've partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.

Learn more at [worldrelief.org](http://worldrelief.org).

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