

world relief 
CHICAGOLAND

CHANGEMAKERS

VOL. 02




POTENTIAL IS ENDLESS

BRIGHT FUTURES SHINE BRIGHTER BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT

As you invest in refugee and immigrant communities, you are a part of creating the space for families and children to flourish. Let me introduce you to one. Aisha* is a young woman and Afghan refugee who experienced immense trauma and suffering before fleeing her home in Afghanistan. She 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 Chicagoland provided Aisha with tutoring, homework help, and walked alongside her through her entire high school application process. This spring, Aisha found out that she was accepted to every school she applied to! This fall, Aisha began high school on scholarship at the prestigious Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.

The 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 the most competitive high schools in the United States and boasts a long list of notable alumni, including two U.S. presidents, five Nobel laureates, and six Medal of Honor recipients.



*Who knows? Thanks to your investment
in creating opportunities for refugees
and immigrants to reach their fullest
potential, Aisha might be next!*

*Aisha's name has been changed for security reasons.

303 CHANGEMAKERS

demonstrated a high level
of financial commitment to our
work and vision this year.

TOTAL GIVEN FROM CHANGEMAKERS IN FISCAL YEAR 2021: \$315,490

20% GROWTH

of new Chicagoland
Changemakers since the launch
in March 2021.

880 GIFTS

to build communities of love
and welcome for refugees,
immigrants, and asylum-seekers.

WHAT IS CHANGEMAKERS CHICAGOLAND?

Changemakers Chicagoland is a small community of people who give generously to and engage deeply with the World Relief community in Aurora, Chicago, and DuPage county. You are among our most committed supporters and your generosity sustains the work and inspires the vision that every refugee and immigrant become stable, well-integrated members of our community.

Changemakers are people like you, putting love into action in every season!

Your gifts are making a difference and we want to keep you up to date on what your generosity is accomplishing. Changemakers will not only receive this occasional newsletter, but will also enjoy exclusive access to program updates, World Relief Chicagoland leadership, and program staff.

**SO HAPPY TO HAVE YOU A PART OF THE
CHANGEMAKERS COMMUNITY!**

CHANGEMAKERS RESOURCE

Want more information
about what your gifts are doing?

Have questions about Changemakers?

Gaby Keim is your Changemakers Team Lead and would love to talk to you!

PHONE: 630-580-5148

EMAIL: [GKEIM@WR.ORG](mailto:gkeim@wr.org)

A LETTER FROM A NEW U.S. CITIZEN

YOU ARE PROVIDING PATHWAYS FORWARD

A repeated phrase within the World Relief Chicagoland community that you may be familiar with is -

*Our immigration system is a little bit
like walking through a
maze that is also a minefield.*

It's true. Individuals come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and bring complex legal needs. A snapshot into some of the stories the Immigration Legal Services (ILS) team has recently advocated for include: an Eastern European couple who needed sign language accommodation at their United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) interview, an asylee from eastern Africa who sought World Relief's services because he was homeless after living in the U.S. for 20+ years and needed to prove his immigration status to get an ID, and a former refugee from western Africa struggled with a request for evidence after trying to reunite with her children for decades because she lost proof of relationship amid civil war.

Another one is Maria. Maria typifies how World Relief Chicagoland builds relationships when providing legal representation. Like many others, she was referred to the legal team by a friend after she had tried everything else and was overwhelmed by the complex and costly legal process. After receiving family-based immigration assistance in filing for her conditional residence through marriage, she returned to complete her removal of conditions for her 10-year green card, and later to apply for citizenship. She has since referred other family members for immigration assistance.



“

I'm very happy and proud citizen now, and I am sure I would not have been able to do this without them. I'm very thankful for all their guidance and help.

”



After naturalizing, Maria wrote this letter to express her thanks.

Hello! Greetings. My name is María. I was born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1960. Because of the complicated and delicate social and political situation in my country, I decided to come to this country [the United States] nine years ago. I met my husband in 2015. When we decided to get married, we needed guidance. After calling various immigration lawyers, it was too much information [for us] to process. We felt at a loss. A friend of mine recommended we call World Relief.

We made an appointment. We met with one of their dear lawyers, Emily. She guided us through the whole process. Everything went quite fast, [with] never an obstacle or mistake. It was a flawless process. This was the reason we decided, when it was time, to also apply for my citizenship with [World Relief]. Emily immediately put me in touch with [another World Relief legal representative]. Even though I did my citizenship process in the middle of the pandemic, this amazing team of lawyers did everything for me by Zoom – no contact – always helping and guiding me through every step. Again, no mistakes. They were always so careful and checked every document that we filled out, making sure that no errors were made. It was also quite faster than expected.

I received my interview date in just eight months although it was supposed to take a year or more. [World Relief] helped me check the process. I'm not very good with computers and technology, but they were always there to help, always answered all my questions by phone or email. They also guided me through all the possible scenarios for the citizenship interview. It all ran smoothly, I brought everything they told me and followed their instructions.

I'm a very happy and proud citizen now, and I am sure I would not have been able to do this without them. I'm very thankful for all their guidance and help.

I pray you can continue helping others as you helped me. Thank you so much.

THE FIRST 90 DAYS

A SEASON OF CHANGE

A NEW HOME

Volunteers come together to create a welcoming environment in refugees new home by delivering and setting up donated furniture and essentials like toothbrushes, soap, and other basic items.



FIRST DAY IN THE U.S.

The first day an individual or family is in the U.S., World Relief staff visit them in their new home. We share what they can expect in America, who's in their community, and how they can get connected.

DOCUMENTATION

An aspect of building stability is ensuring refugees and immigrants have proper documentation like Social Security cards, Employment Authorization cards, as well as, understand documents like their lease.



DREAMING MADE POSSIBLE

Refugees bring incredible skill and experience to the U.S. World Relief walks alongside each person on the journey towards long-term integration setting goals like learning English or receiving a degree or certification for their career.



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AIRPORT ARRIVAL

Staff and volunteers welcome and empower refugees picking them up from the airport. Volunteers continue helping them get to various appointments as needed.



SECURING EMPLOYMENT

World Relief helps prepare every refugee for work through job placement, workplace education and training, financial literacy training, economic empowerment and resiliency, and ongoing career counseling.



THRIVING TOGETHER

Whether it's securing housing, supplying basic necessities, or enrolling children in school, together we come alongside these families every step of the way as they become stable in our community.

ONGOING SUPPORT

The first 90 days are full of contact. The months following refugees and immigrants continue ESL and career pathway classes, receive trauma counseling, or are integrated with other services. As they continue their life journey, World Relief helps reach specific goals like a new job or buying a house.

GLOSSARY

PREPARING TO WELCOME HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE SEEKING SAFETY

REFUGEE

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.

HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

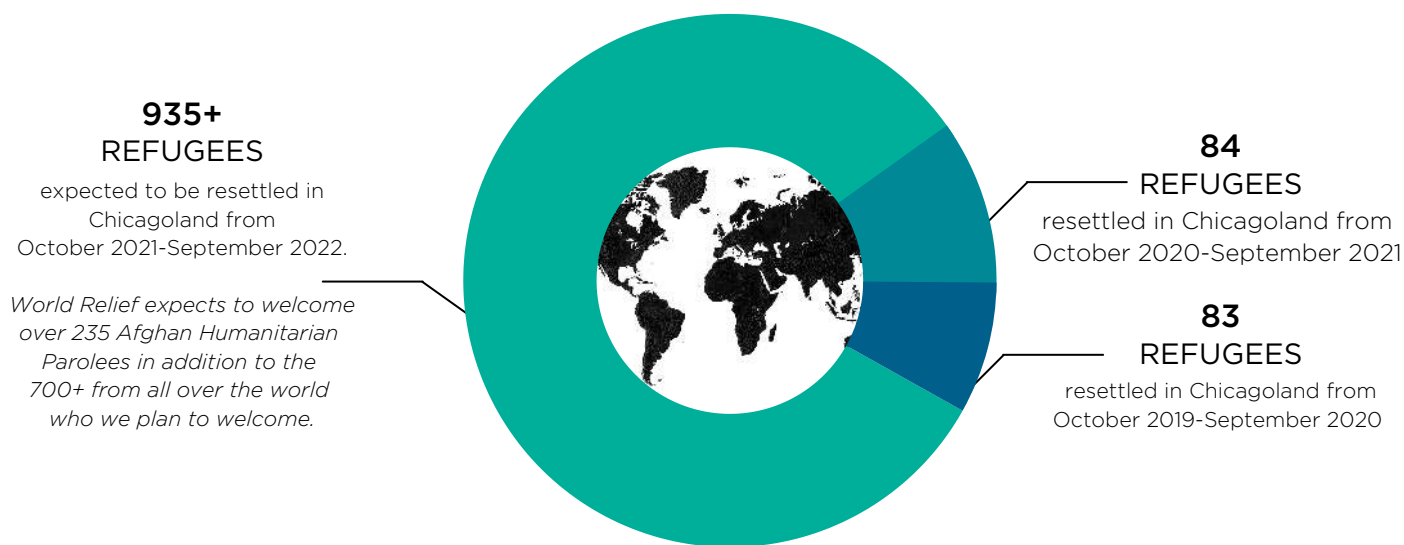
Humanitarian Parole is a status granted to someone who is eligible to come to the United States on a temporary basis due to an emergency. This allows the individual time to pursue Permanent Legal Resident status in the United States.

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA (SIV)

The Afghan SIV program was established under the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, with the intention of facilitating the expedited visa processing of Afghans whose lives were being threatened as a result of their service alongside the US military. There are currently approximately 18,000 Afghan SIV applicants awaiting processing and 53,000 family members in need of protection.

ASYLUM-SEEKER

An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Every year, around one million people seek asylum. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker.



HI CHANGEMAKERS CHICAGOLAND,

As I reflect on just crossing the six month line since the launch of Changemakers Chicagoland, there is one repeating word that keeps coming to mind - heart.

I am amazed that each of our hearts weighs less than a pound yet beats over 100,000 times a day and pumps an incredible 1.5 gallons of blood through our body every minute.

Such a small organ is capable of so much. What I've been reminded of through the Changemakers community is similar. Though we may be a small (yet growing) community, the amount of love you have poured out to World Relief is unmeasurable.

It takes heart to keep going. It takes heart to stay focused. It takes heart to give. It takes heart to believe. It takes heart to stand up. It takes heart to love and welcome.

You have taken heart. And together, we will continue to take heart as we welcome hundreds of individuals and families rebuilding their lives in a new home this upcoming year. I'm inspired and thankful to be a part of this work alongside you.

Taking heart with you,



GABY KEIM
CHANGEMAKERS CHICAGOLAND LEAD

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for the continued success of finding permanent apartments and houses for existing and newly arriving refugees and immigrants. Pray for new connections with landlords across Chicagoland.
- Pray for the resources and wisdom needed to welcome an expected 150+ Afghans and 750+ refugees from all over the world this coming year.
- Pray for the schools that newly arriving children & youth will attend. Pray that these schools can begin preparing emotionally and physically for the anticipated influx of refugee arrivals.
- Pray for our posture to reflect love and welcome to our new neighbors.