


2023 Year in Review

WELCOME HOME



world relief 

CHICAGOLAND

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We all have experienced a move or two in our lifetimes. The process of packing up boxes, dealing with moving companies, and then spending weeks wondering how to unpack your stuff and make your new place into a home – it can be overwhelming. Imagine now that you have spent the last 20 years in a refugee camp, and you received the amazing news that the United States is welcoming you to their country. So, you pack up the things you own into a bag, make the arduous trip with multiple layovers on a plane, and arrive in a country that is nothing like your home.

What does it take to help someone feel welcomed in a place they now have to call home?

This is what we will see together through our 2023 Year-in-Review – the incredible impact of your support to provide spaces of welcome, allowing immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants to build their new homes here. You will read about a family being reunited after years apart as well as a family utilizing a Match Savings Program to purchase their very first home in the United States. You will see the power of learning the English language as we celebrate with Sue Reynolds her 35th year with World Relief as an English language teacher.

There has been exponential growth in the number of refugees that were resettled into the area. And more churches being empowered to step in and create spaces of welcome, providing homes and apartments for asylum seekers, and welcome kits year-round for new refugees.

We are overwhelmed by the power of your partnership; so many people have truly felt welcomed home. As we look ahead, our arms are opened wide to continue this work. Thank you for opening yours as well.

Susan Sperry
Executive Director



“Nyasa Meso was relentless in her desire to become a homeowner. When I met her in Aurora in 2016 as a newly arrived refugee with a large family, I knew she had many barriers ahead. They needed to be able to afford rent, get jobs, learn English, and learn how to drive a car. There were many starts and stops, but in 2020, Nyasa asked to enroll in the IDA Match Savings Grant to save for a home. I was less than confident, but Nyasa was determined. Almost 3 years after she enrolled, having saved over \$20,000, she closed on her first home.” - Sasha Brady, World Relief Chicagoland Staff Member

“I was losing faith, but when I saw this home, I had faith. - Mawazo Meso

*“It’s a good, quiet community. The kids can get on the bus for school, and they are playing soccer.”
- Erick Meso*

“Working with Mawazo and Erick Meso as they helped their mother purchase a home for their family was a highlight of my year. Their dedication and determination were evident as we met together. This wasn’t a typical transaction - Mawazo and Erick are young, 19- and 21-year-old siblings who were helping their mother overcome language and cultural hurdles to buy a home for her family in the United States. While many other students their age might have had other priorities, Mawazo and Erick were focused on providing their younger brothers and sisters a yard to play in and a home to grow up in. With the help of a wonderful and caring realtor, Robert Hanna, some special bank programs, and a generous matching grant from World Relief, the Mesos’ dream of owning a home became a reality at the end of August.”
- Kent Cochrum, Senior Loan Originator

World Relief's IDA Match Savings Grant ran from Oct 2019-Sept 2023:

- 150 individuals made an asset purchase
- 20 education purchases
- 2 businesses started
- 36 homes purchased
- 105 vehicles purchased
- Over \$700,000 saved
- Assets totaling over \$11.5 million in value



Pictured: Nyasa Meso and her children



"I like my house because it's mine!" - Nyasa Meso

WELCOME HOME

THIS YEAR...

15

FAMILIES
PURCHASED
HOMES

85

PEOPLE
PURCHASED
THEIR FIRST CAR

557

PEOPLE PARTICIPATED
IN THE DRIVERS PERMIT CLASS

647

PEOPLE
BEGAN A JOB

INDIVIDUALS SERVED
THROUGH IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES

2,969

GREEN CARDS
RECEIVED

190

INDIVIDUALS BECAME
U.S. CITIZENS

339

FAMILIES
REUNITED

112

Mother & Daughter Reunited



*Pictured Left:
Helen & Fortune Tar*



“Working with World Relief, everything was so perfect. Sara was so kind and patient. She had the best way to handle our case.” - Helen Tar

“I met with Helen in November 2021 for our first consultation to discuss filing for her daughter, Fortune, who was 10 at the time. It was harder than normal to gather the documents needed to file for reunification since she was a minor. We had to rely on neighbors and relatives who were helping to take care of her. As the case progressed, it was rewarding to share in Helen’s growing excitement to be reunited with her daughter. Finally, in August of 2023, Fortune’s visa was approved, and she came to the U.S.! Helen shared with me that Fortune has been adjusting well and is enjoying school and making new friends. This kind of work is so important because every additional day a child is separated from a parent, it impacts the child. Reunifying children with their parents is one of the most rewarding types of cases I get to work on!” - Sara Oh, Staff Attorney

“We had been apart for four years. There are so many political issues in my home country; I was forced to flee. I feared for my daughter, Fortune, who could not come with me. Sometimes they kidnap children as they make their way to school. But then, all the hard work paid off. When Fortune came to the U.S., I was filled with joy and was so happy. A burden is gone.” - Helen Tar

At World Relief, our mission is to empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable.

2023 Church Engagement

216

CHURCHES ACTIVELY
IN PARTNERSHIP

192

NEW CHURCHES CONNECTED
AND SEEKING TO PARTNER

We celebrate the partnership and commitment of Faith Covenant Church in Wheaton, IL. One year ago, they hosted a luncheon and learned about the need for English Language spaces and tutors, especially if childcare could be provided. Pastor Nate remarked that after the meeting, it was clear God “provided the right people in the room.” There were people with a passion for English, those with masters degrees in teaching, and some with years of experience volunteering with English Language classes already. With planning and prayer, it was clear that God was doing something!

Faith launched their English Language tutoring classes on Wednesday nights, aligning with a time when they provided nursery services and classes for children (free childcare for students!). Judy Duvall, a volunteer, remarked that, “None of us had a ton of experience, but we wanted to do this. You sit and listen, hearing the heart break. You pray, and just be there for them. At the end of the semester, we had a meal together. It was fun to socialize and eat all the wonderful food. It’s a way to get out of your comfort zone. I’m glad that Faith is willing to be intercultural.”

Along with providing English Language classes, Faith hosts two different immigrant churches in their space on Sundays - a Karen (Burmese) church and an African Church, which is so aligned with Faith that they call their church the International Faith Covenant Church!

“The church should have priority in this space and direct resources to it. God is always raising people with resources. Don’t be in God’s way!”
- Pastor Nate



In 2023...

1,510 volunteers gave 29,405 hours of time to support their new immigrant neighbors.

That is equivalent to almost a million dollars worth of time!

Volunteer Highlight: Aurora

Kelly Brens

We are grateful for Kelly, who serves as a Friendship Partner and Health Advocate. She has helped with families that have higher medical needs in many practical ways. Kelly began to serve after the crisis in Afghanistan, feeling a burden for those who had to flee their homes and come to the U.S. She heard of the Friendship Partner role and thought that sounded like a perfect fit. When asked where this burden came from, she explained, “It was my faith for sure! When you get a call from God, follow it. I try to pay attention to these burdens.



I know it is His way of showing me what to do.” In sharing a time that was special to her, she remembered a family who she helped for 6-months. A few months after their time together ended, she received a phone call from the daughter. “After a while of chatting, she put her mom on who barely spoke English. After a couple of minutes the daughter got back on the call and said that her mom just wanted to hear my voice. This is a ministry of showing up and being there for these people.”

Volunteer Highlight: DuPage

Andrea Strycker

Andrea serves as an Office Assistant with the primary focus to support our Intensive Medical Case Management team. Annie Kim, Refugee Health Coordinator, commented that she wouldn't be able to keep up without Andrea's support! She can be found in the Carol Stream office multiple days a week, scheduling appointments, navigating insurance, and communicating with clients.



Her heart to serve is evident, and her admin skills are invaluable! Andrea began to volunteer with World Relief after hearing about the work from a staff member who happened to be a friend of her son. Andrea remarks, "She made it sound so enticing! It was important to me that the organization be faith-based, because I want to connect my service to what I believe in Christ. I love the stories and the people. My life is enriched because of this work."

Volunteer Highlight: Chicago

Alfredo Lopez

Alfredo serves as a Health Advocate, consistently transporting and advocating for the families he helps. Alfredo shares, "When I initially moved to the U.S., I was in a tough situation. I was exiled from my country and lived in incredible fear because of the constant threats from the government to my family. I was just 17 and by myself when everything happened. There was so much to learn. I had fears and insecurities that any



other teenager of that age could have. However, thanks to the support the people I came across in this journey, I was able to make it. It was these friends that came from World Relief, that made me want to do the same for the ones who need it. I believe the most important reason to volunteer is the positive impact one could have in a community. Once you see that you played a role, gave a reason to smile, you will feel a sensation of well-being - not to mention that it is very fun when you support a cause you're passionate about!"

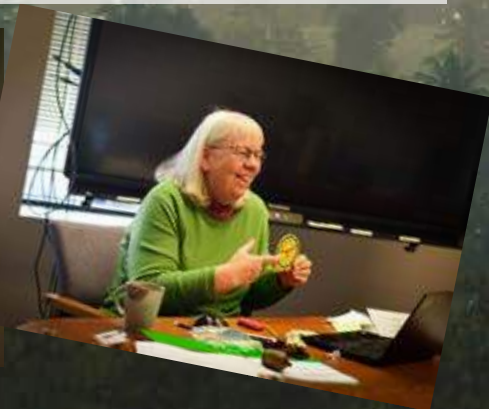
Celebrating Sue Reynolds:

35 Years of Welcoming the Stranger Home through English Language Learning

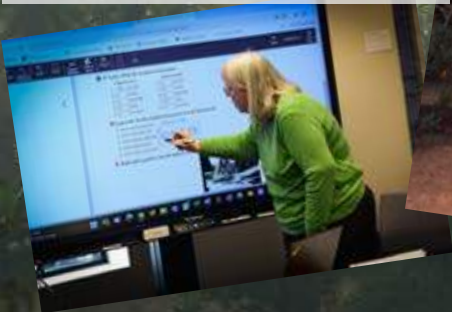
I remember my interview with World Relief. It was back in the fall of 1983 for an internship in Chicago and DuPage. I came wearing a brand-new outfit, attempting to impress, and the Executive Director, George Wadsworth at the time, came out wearing a pair of jeans! Somehow, I ended up getting the internship. In 1984, I went on my way to the Philippines to teach English in a Refugee Processing Center. We had a contract to teach kids up to age 14. I honestly didn't know what I was doing. I spent a year teaching kids and learning on the job. I loved the camp and working interculturally. I was active in the local, Cambodian church and excited about the people, but not so excited about English language classes!

When I came back to the U.S., at that time, there was a lot of talk about figuring out 'where' God was calling you to. But then I heard one preacher say, 'We need to be called to people, so ask God what people you are called to.' I felt in my heart that I didn't know where God wanted me to go, but I knew I would.

As I continued to work with World Relief and spend time with refugees, this became the people group I knew I was called to serve. I learned a lot more about teaching. I returned to the Philippines and became a teacher supervisor. I loved that the staff lived in the middle of the camp, and we were surrounded by all the refugees. The people in the camp had been there for years and had gone through years of English learning to prepare themselves for their move to the U.S. It was a very hopeful, optimistic place.



When I came back to the U.S., I got a job in the warehouse and taught English at night. I thought I was headed back overseas quickly. This was the fall of '88. I worked with migrants who all swam across the Rio Grande to come to the U.S. The then-Executive Director, Marilyn Sweeney, noticed that some of the students were falling through the cracks because they had never been to school in their own country. So, she asked me to teach literacy for beginners, introducing the students to English literacy while they are still learning English. This is an incredibly challenging journey for the students. I was in awe of their determination in learning a new language and literacy while navigating life in a new culture. The second semester of doing this, I had my epiphany - THIS WAS THE THING! This was how I was to work with refugees. Since that time, I've been teaching adults who did not go to school in their home country. I stuck with World Relief because they went this deep to help refugees. Over the years I've seen funding come and go. We've always needed more volunteers, but we make do and are grateful for whoever can give their time. The main thing that has remained the same is that if a refugee can learn English, they will make it farther in the U.S. They will have job security, and be able to raise their children well in a world covered in English. They will be able to participate in their community - because English permeates it all. More than once in my life, I've been telling someone my story and what I have been able to do for work for so many years. They always tell me, "You are so lucky!" to which I respond, "Yeah, I know." There is meaning, a great reward, and a true sense of serving God here. I am truly grateful.



THE IMPACT YOU MADE THROUGH WELCOME



**114 Car
Seats Given**




**670 Children
Served**



**245 Backpacks &
School Supplies Given**



**102,898 Hours of
English Language Classes**



**625 Medical
Screenings
Performed**



**846 Refugees
Resettled**

**8,640 People Served
Throughout the Region**

Meet Jeanette Stadick, a faithful donor to World Relief Chicagoland for over 19 years, giving each month through The Path for the past 10 years. Hear what she had to say about her journey of giving:

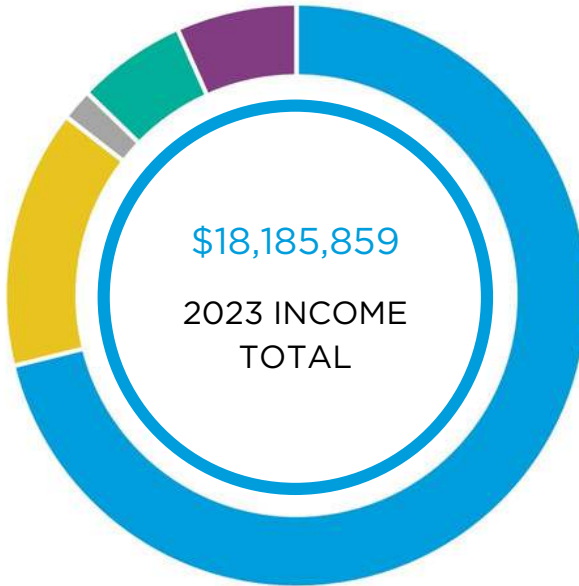
“I first heard about World Relief through my daughter, who started to work for them. I was retired and decided to give back my time through English language tutoring. I fell in love with the people; they are so resilient. It’s good to get involved and find out what is happening. There is so much talk of fear surrounding immigration, but if you spend time with people, you find out there is nothing to be afraid of.

I began to give. I like to give monthly and it is easy to set-up online! My faith is a huge part of why I give. I have a desire to give away what I have, to be sensitive to the needs of others. I would encourage others to give because the U.S. tends to be the end all be all. We think we have it all, but I find it is good to see the other side of things and question why we are so fortunate. We are all created in God’s image, so give to the need.”



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2023 INCOME



71.12%

Public Grants

14.38%

Private Income

1.74%

Earned Income
(Fee)

6.07%

Use of Cash
Reserves

6.69%

Gifts in Kind

2023 EXPENSES



85.5%

Program expenses

2.1%

Fundraising

12.4%

Admin and
other indirect
costs

WORLD RELIEF CHICAGOLAND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2023 Fiscal Year (October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023)

Income	Actual	Budget
Public Grants	\$ 12,934,629	\$ 12,546,321
Private Income	\$ 2,615,479	\$ 3,350,000
Earned Income	\$ 316,688	\$ 320,000
Use of Cash Reserves	\$ 1,103,079	\$ 873,661
Gifts in Kind	\$ 1,215,984	\$ 700,000
Income Total	\$ 18,185,859	\$ 17,789,982

Expenses	Actual	Budget
Salaries	\$ 8,672,339	\$ 8,652,871
Fringe benefits	\$ 1,988,925	\$ 2,411,206
Travel	\$ 60,147	\$ 55,675
Supplies	\$ 29,012	\$ 21,276
Contractual	\$ 397,576	\$ 158,690
Other direct costs	\$ 4,257,940	\$ 3,965,882
Indirect costs	\$ 1,563,937	\$ 1,824,382
Gifts in Kind	\$ 1,215,984	\$ 700,000
Expense Total	\$ 18,185,859	\$ 17,789,982

FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS

Foundation and corporate partners in Chicagoland make a pivotal difference in the lives of immigrants and refugees as they partner with World Relief’s life-changing programs. Providing catalyst funding, responding generously to urgent community needs, and helping to sustain our vital programs through yearly grants - we are deeply grateful for the grant, foundation, and corporate partners named here, as well as those which prefer to remain anonymous. They have shown their commitment to building welcoming and just communities to help families rebuild their lives.

GRANT PARTNERS

Bureau of Population,
Refugees, and
Migration at the U.S.
Department of State

City of Aurora

City of Chicago

Cook County Health

DuPage County

DuPage County
Workforce Development
Division

Illinois Community
College Board

Illinois Coalition for
Immigrant and Refugee
Rights

Illinois Department
of Commerce and
Economic Opportunity

Illinois Department of
Human Services, Office
of Welcoming Centers
for Refugee and
Immigrant Services

Illinois Department of
Public Health

Illinois Secretary of
State

Jewish Federation of
Metro Chicago

Milton Township

Office of Refugee
Resettlement at the U.S.
Department of Health and
Human Services

United Way, Emergency
Food and Shelter
Program

U.S. Department
of Labor

U.S. Federal
Emergency
Management Agency
(FEMA)

Kingdom Charitable Trust



Fox Valley United Way



Jewish United Fund
EDUCATION
TOGETHER for GOOD

WB & HP White
Foundation



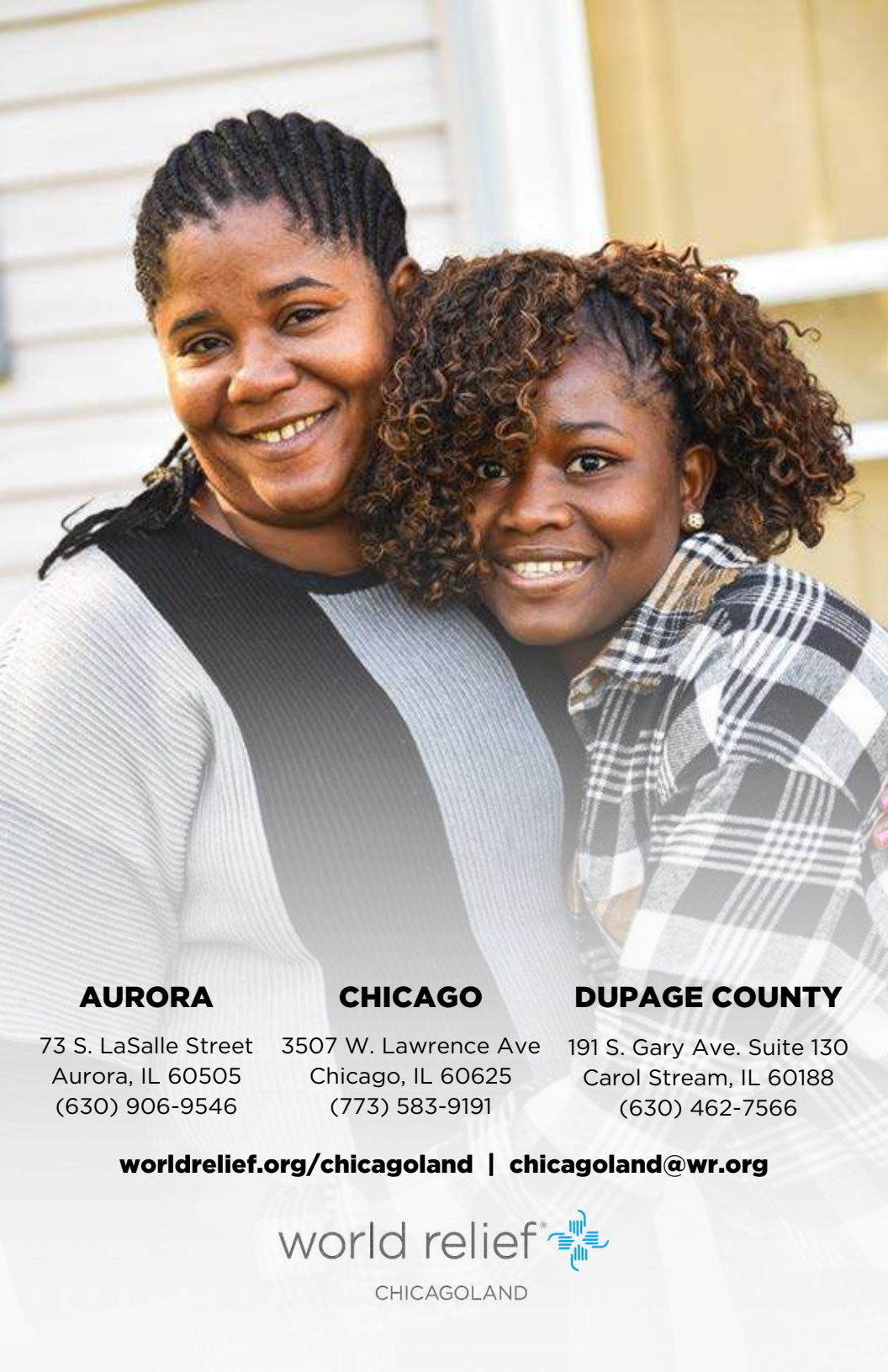
United Way
of Metro Chicago



MacArthur
Foundation



*Thank you for welcoming
our new neighbors home!*



AURORA

73 S. LaSalle Street
Aurora, IL 60505
(630) 906-9546

CHICAGO

3507 W. Lawrence Ave
Chicago, IL 60625
(773) 583-9191

DUPAGE COUNTY

191 S. Gary Ave. Suite 130
Carol Stream, IL 60188
(630) 462-7566

worldrelief.org/chicagoland | chicagoland@wr.org

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CHICAGOLAND