

# Refugee Assistance



*A Bridge to Assist People to  
Cross From One Life to Another*

## **GENERAL MEETING MINUTES March 26, 2019**

**Attendance:** Gerry Gannon, Mary Gannon, Jonathan Golden, Noel Robinson, Leo Rogers, Carole Rogers, Tom Lewis, Norman Lowrey, Tina Genest, Dave Sullivan, Tom Graham, Carol Graham, Beverly Tignor, Charles Courtney, and Alison Millan, IRC in Elizabeth

Gerry Gannon called the meeting to order shortly after 7:00 p.m. He said the purpose of the meeting was to learn more about another possible partner, the International Rescue Committee.

### **Special Guest: Alison Millan, director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Elizabeth**

Jonathan Golden introduced the evening's speaker. Alison Millan said IRC works in over 40 countries. They have offices in 24 cities in the U.S. IRC has been resettling refugees since 1984. Last year they accepted 135 people in New Jersey. They have supported 65 so far this fiscal year (Oct. 1 fiscal year), with 30 being processed just this month. They have come from Afghanistan, Syria, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and other African countries. There have also been some from Central American countries; these are generally minors from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala looking to connect with families or other connections already in the U.S.

Alison said they have a H.O. M.E. program, for Housing, Outreach, Mentorship, Education. This just started last year and it is similar to the arrangement RAMP has had with Church World Service. Four families have been in the H.O.M.E. program this past year, with most being housed in Elizabeth and Roselle.

She described the areas where IRC provides resources:

1. Resettlement team. This group works with the refugees for the first 4-6 months. They have a case manager for the families. There is a matching grant program to help with employment and ESL. They teach budgeting. They will work with refugees for up to 5 years.
2. Economic empowerment. They offer classes in job readiness training. They work with Marriott on a job training program. Ninety percent of those who took the program are now employed.

3. Education and learning. They help with school enrollment, psycho-social support, etc. About 170 children are active in the program, in K-12 in Elizabeth and Roselle. They also run a summer academy and have an adult education coordinator.
4. Immigration department. They serve all immigrants through a staff immigration attorney. This is fee-based, but 40 percent of the overall budget comes from private donations.

Alison then answered questions. She promised to send a H.O.M.E. team agreement, so we can look it over along with IRC to see if it makes sense to partner.

Alison suggested that while their staff would remain in Elizabeth, we might look to partner using telephone or SKYPE, with frequent check-ins to see how things are going.

She said we could look to continue to have refugees like we have already had – families, perhaps ones from countries we are comfortable with. Alison said we might also be able to get refugees who already have family or other connections in Morris County.

Alison said IRC holds a class once a month – Introduction to Refugee Resettlement in New Jersey.

She mentioned two groups similar to RAMP that IRC has worked with: One World, One Love in Ocean County and Refugee Assistance Partners in Scotch Plains. She suggested we be in touch with them.

Gerry Gannon closed the meeting by saying the steering committee would meet and discuss the input from First Friends and IRC and make a recommendation about our future course at the next general meeting.

**Next General Meeting: April 30, 7 PM at St. Peter's Church in Morristown.**

The meeting adjourned shortly after 9:00 p.m.

Minutes taken by Dave Sullivan