

RAMP Presentation Jan. 2019

You may want to begin the presentation with this short video: "Refugees" from Church World Service

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBrVsz9T2gw&feature=youtu.be>

You have seen the pictures. The small boy washed ashore on the beach in Turkey. Dead. The stunned child in Aleppo in the orange chair, feet dangling, covered in soot and blood. And in Afghanistan, innocent victims of a car bombing in Kabul.

These are the haunting images from the Syrian and Afghanistan wars. These conflicts have caused the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. Almost nine million Syrians and Afghans have fled their countries.

I hope you have also seen the stories of some of the Syrian and Afghan families who have resettled to the United States. Generous American hosts welcoming refugee fathers, mothers and children to a safe haven. And after a while, these families getting jobs, going to school and assimilating into their new country.

In the spring of 2016, a coalition of Morris County area faith-based organizations came together to take action in this crisis. These were Christians, Jews and Muslims. The volunteer group is known as RAMP, for Refugee Assistance Morris Partners. RAMP is working with Church World Service, the relief arm of the National Council of Churches of Christ, to bring Middle Eastern families to the Morris County area. We are in the business of giving these families hope for the first time in many years. We want to be a bridge to assist people to cross from one life to another.

Before coming to the United States, these families are subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to our country. They are screened by the United Nations Refugee Agency, the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department. This vetting process can take two to three years or longer. And we have found that many of those coming from Afghan worked for U.S. interests in that country and are no longer safe there.

RAMP and Church World Service co-sponsors the families for their first few months in the U.S. After that, the families are expected to become self-sufficient.

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RAMP's help includes finding and furnishing suitable living arrangement and providing a full range of core support services to assist the families. We help with welcoming them, community orientation, employment opportunities, social services, educational assistance, English language instruction, transportation and supplemental financial assistance.

We need volunteers to welcome families, find or provide housing, and get household equipment, kitchen equipment, food and clothing. We also secure medical, dental, optical and other services, as well as transportation, tutoring in English, and instruction in other subjects as needed. Volunteers can also help families meet other people related to their religion, nationality, profession and areas of expertise. To volunteer, go to our website at www.rampnj.org/volunteer. Or you can send us an email at info@rampnj.org.

We also need donations. In addition to the public support families receive, private donations are needed to help families in their first months of transition. For donations, RAMP is working as a special project fund of the Community Foundation of New Jersey. All donations are tax-deductible. Financial donations may be sent to Treasurer, RAMP, P.O. Box 1544, Morristown, NJ 07960. Checks should be made to the Community Foundation of New Jersey with RAMP indicated in the memo line. And you can contribute with a credit card. All this information is on our website at www.rampnj.org. RAMP also accepts in-kind donations, especially of house furnishings and clothing.

RAMP members include Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Muslims, Jews, Presbyterians, Methodists, Mormons, Unitarians and United Church of Christ. Others are welcome to join.

Our goal is to help as many families as our volunteer resources will allow. This is a huge problem, but we feel obligated by our consciences and our faith to do whatever we can to help, however small. If you give a family in distress a safe place they can call home, you have made a difference.

As of 2019 we have welcomed and supported three families, a total of 12 people. One family is from Syria and two from Afghanistan. It is so heartwarming to be part of their life stories here in the U.S. We have seen two of the families give birth to daughters in the U.S., brand

new citizens. We watch with love and pride as the families learn English, get jobs, driver's licenses, and go to school. They go from being refugees to being friends and neighbors.

I suggest this may be the most gratifying volunteer thing I have ever done. Because of RAMP a dozen people are now happy, productive and safe. If you would care to join us, we have a place for you.