



THE
**Welcome
to America**
PROJECT

Mentorship Programs Support Local Refugees

The Welcome to America Project has a partnership with Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC), in which we employ young mentees from their Refugee Youth Mentorship Program. Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest (LSS-SW) has a similar program. We recently chatted with Aubrey Held, Youth Refugee Manager, of CPLC and Michelle Buttrum, Education Coordinator, of LSS SW about their program goals and ways that you can get involved.

The goal of the CPLC Youth Refugee Mentoring Program is to promote positive civic and social engagement and support individual education and vocational advancement. To accomplish their goals, youth will be matched with a positive adult mentor/case manager who will provide the youth with personalized interaction. Youth will be provided case management to support their education and career development. The program is funded by the Arizona Department of Economic Security - Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program. The Youth Refugee Mentoring Program can serve eligible beneficiaries ages 16-24 who are within their first five years in the United States. Eligible beneficiaries are defined as refugees, amerasians, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, special immigrant visa holders and victims of human trafficking.

The program strives to facilitate connections between refugee youth in Phoenix and supportive members of the community (mentors) who will help them strive towards their educational, vocational, and social goals. Program mentors are volunteers who have gone through a background check, central registry check, and obtained a Fingerprint Clearance Card. Mentors serve as friends, role models and consistent sources of support by helping their mentee develop and reach their personal, academic and career goals. Most importantly, they build a fun, trusting one-on-one relationship with their mentee

In walking alongside refugee youth, case managers and mentors will also have the opportunity to grow to understand the incredible strength, beauty, and resilience of the refugee community. These invaluable partnerships between refugee youth and other members of the Phoenix community will serve to bring together people of diverse backgrounds and, through relationship, mutually enrich one another's lives.

LSS-SW has two career development programs, Refugee Youth Career Pathways (RYCP) and New American Pathways (NAP). The goals and services provided by both programs are much the same with the main difference being participant eligibility.

The goal of the RYCP and NAP programs are to provide skilled or professional vocational training that leads to skilled employment to improve long-term integration and career opportunities of refugees and immigrants. The program provides individualized case management, financial aid for job training and related expenses, and optional mentorship. Eligibility for RYCP includes refugees and immigrants ages 16 - 24 who have been in the country for up to 10 years. Eligibility for NAP includes refugees and immigrants ages 18+ who have been in the country for up to 20 years. All documented immigrant statuses are eligible for the programs, not only refugees. RYCP is funded by Starbucks and NAP is funded by Walmart.

Mentors partner with clients and program coordinators to help the clients reach their education and/or career goals. Mentors may also help the clients with other needs such as familiarizing them with their neighborhood, resources, or American systems. LSS-SW asks for a 6 - 12 month commitment of contact with the clients weekly, preferably in person when possible. At this time, LSS-SW is in need of referrals for new clients, especially youth, as well as mentors.

Abdul, a Rohingya refugee who fled a life-threatening situation, arrived to Arizona less than four years ago and is a current mentee at WTAP. He will soon graduate high school, attend college and continue education that will lead to a career in cyber security. What makes this story more amazing is that Abdul had never seen a computer, not even a smart phone, until he arrived to our country and now he is finishing his high school requirements with on-line classes. At WTAP, Abdul will be assisting with computer prep, bike readiness and other logistics around our support for refugees. We are all a part of the welcomes . . . and mentorships.