

Meet the Sawari Family



As you may be aware, our LSC (Lutheran Services-Carolina) Circle of Welcome here at St. Mark's has been given a refugee family to support. The Sawari family has five members, Leda (mom), Safiullah (or Safi for short - dad) and three children; two sons, ages 14 and 8, and a daughter, 12. The family arrived in Asheville in late July.

The Sawari family is originally from Kabul. Safi was a safe driver for women. The family was able to escape from Kabul by planning and booking roundtrip passage from Afghanistan with the intent not to return. The five of them initially stayed in a single room while in Qatar. Then they headed to a U.S. Army base where they stayed for an extended period until their vetting process was complete.

Since arriving in the States, they have moved twice. Their first accommodation was two rooms in an extended stay hotel for two weeks, then the LSC welcome house in west Asheville for another brief period. Finally, on August 6, the family settled in their townhouse on Hazel Mill Road. When asked why they left Kabul, knowing at least in part all the challenges they would face, Safi responded, "For the children's future."

Despite being forced to leave their home, all the moving, trying to understand an extremely different culture, and not speaking English, the Sawari family remains cheerful, upbeat and exceedingly grateful. Leda loves to cook, and she is very good at it as well! When she learned that Jan Hronek had COVID, she sent a lovely meal home for her. That type of hospitality is a very important part of Afghan culture. Rest assured, when visiting the Sawari's, you will always be offered food and drink.

The family arrived here with nothing. Through your donations and the work of LSC, their townhouse is now furnished. The Circle of Welcome has provided linens and supplies for the kitchen and bathroom as well as other items for the house. The last significant need is for an apartment size stackable washer and dryer. Through the help of St. Mark's, the Circle is seeking to purchase a used unit for the family. Circle members have also taken the family to health screenings, meetings at the Islamic Center, the grocery store and transported the kids to a camp.

LSC stresses the importance of independence and for refugee families to become self-sufficient as soon as possible. To that end, Safi has already found a job. Many refugees wait for LSC to find work for them. However, Safi took the initiative and - through some connections at the Islamic Center - found work on his own. The children are enrolled in schools, and they are already picking up some English. Their townhouse is close to a bus route. So, LSC has encouraged the family to learn to ride the bus. Some of our volunteers have ridden the bus with family members to get them more comfortable with the mass transit system. We are also working with Leda and Safi to help them learn English.