

Illinois has welcomed more than 1,400 Afghan refugees in the last few months. Together, we've prepared for their arrival, set up their apartments, and greeted them at the airport.

Now, as they adjust to a new culture and set of customs, there's a lot we can learn from and about our new neighbors! For example:

People from Afghanistan are Afghan, not Afghani. Afghani refers to the national currency. Another common misconception is that Afghanistan is in the Middle East, as opposed to **its true location at the crossroads of Central and South Asia.**

Afghanistan is a diverse country made up of many ethnic groups. Some groups and families are conservative and have stricter gender roles, while others do not.

One of the first things you'll notice about Afghans is their warm hospitality. Given that Afghanistan consumes the most tea per capita in the world, don't be surprised if an Afghan family invites you to tea! We've made sure to equip each apartment with tea carafes and kitchenware to cook rice and naan so families feel more at home.

Religion, community, and especially family are consistent cornerstones across Afghan culture. This includes close-knit extended families, so imagine how difficult it is for the 53% of Afghans with no immediate family in the U.S. and extended family left overseas. They've experienced incredible trauma and lack familial support systems, so our culturally-sensitive therapeutic services are as important as ever.