A Farewell: A Final Afghan Family Resettlement Update

When our committee, an offshoot of the parish's Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Ministry, took on sponsorship of an Afghan family of seven back in May of 2025, we had a goal: to support the family to a point where they were no longer dependent on us.

That moment has arrived, perhaps sooner than any one of us in our hardworking little interfaith group had envisioned. On Nov. 20, the family will move to Sacramento, Calif., to be with relatives and to continue their quest to find work for the parents and enhanced educational opportunities for the three older sons and elementary school age son and teenage daughter.

This is a bittersweet moment. In the beginning, the Rasoulis (not their real name) were "the family we are helping." But it did not take long, as we accompanied the parents shopping, joined the family's children for home and school night or struggled (laughingly) through conversations with Google Translate, before they became something else: our very dear friends. And we will all miss them terribly.

We have shared many meals together, and they have introduced us to dishes that, in the beginning, seemed exotic. Kofta (beef or lamb meatballs in a spicy tomato sauce), bamya (a hearty okra and tomato stew) and firini (a delicious traditional eggless custard) come to mind. Now, those meals seem to us like just your everyday home-cooked dinner with people you have grown to love.

And yes, on a practical level, we have done exactly what sponsors are supposed to do: helped them find a place to live, directed them to job training opportunities, and caught them up on long-postponed medical and dental necessities. We filled their house with furniture and all the basic necessities. We have paid their rent and utilities and given them grocery money. We helped them get their Green Cards and their Social Security numbers. We found an immigration attorney for them. And most of that could not have happened without the generosity of you, St. Martin's, especially in the early going, when absolutely nothing about this venture was certain. Call it what it was: a leap of faith.

Whatever we were able to do for them, it is absolutely dwarfed by what they have done for us. We have learned so much from them about the power of hope, resilience, kindness, patience, good humor, and the extraordinary Afghan spirit of hospitality. We will miss the time spent in their presence.

During this time, we also learned a lot about ourselves. In the beginning, there were naysayers, people who strongly doubted that a group of lay people with absolutely no experience in refugee resettlement could pull this off. It's still a marvel to me that we each found our own little niche and settled into it – health, social benefits, house hunting, moving, immigration law, finances, employment, and more.

And here we are now, after a year and a half of effort, saying goodbye. That's the part they don't prepare you for when you're recruited for sponsorship. But there's also a good deal of pride that goes along with the sadness.

We ask that you join us in prayers for the family's safety and prosperity as they make their move West into the next phase of their lives.