

# Circle of Welcome Program in Saint Paul

The Circle of Welcome program was developed to connect community groups directly with refugee families. Through this program, faith and community groups have an opportunity to walk with a refugee family as friends, supporters and advocates to help them become established more quickly. In the process, faith and community groups are also able to learn more about refugee families' lives and cultures.

## HOME SAFE IN SAINT PAUL

Refugee families arrive in the United States legally after being forced to flee violence and persecution. Once families arrive in Minnesota, LSS Refugee Services works to secure safe, dignified, and affordable housing for them. **For many, that home is located in the Eastside neighborhood of St. Paul!** The neighborhood provides a number of cultural resources along with affordable housing options.

Part of welcoming families to their new home is helping them build connections to the community around them. These connections make a big impact for newly arrived families. The Circle of Welcome program acts as a transformative neighborly support for families during the challenges of resettlement. The impact of many different neighbors coming together to walk alongside a newly arrived family is life-changing.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Saint Paul churches have been a part of LSS' Circle of Welcome program since its inception and have a decades-long history of welcoming new neighbors. In the past five years, six faith communities in the St. Paul area have partnered with the Circle of Welcome program. Of those six, two were ELCA congregations.

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Community and faith groups of different shapes and sizes are welcome! They are matched with a refugee family by staff at LSS who schedule and facilitate an initial meeting between volunteer team and the family.

LSS has created three different models for participation. *Each model includes a six-month volunteer commitment with a financial contribution of \$6,000-8,000 made by the group.*

- **New Arrivals:** Volunteers work closely with refugees who have arrived within the last 90 days. Activities might include setting up an apartment, helping adults find jobs, practicing English, and running errands.
- **Post Arrivals:** With language barriers and time needed to adjust to a new culture, refugees can benefit from longer-term support by caring volunteers. In the Post Arrival model, volunteers work with families who have been in the US for longer than 90 days.
- **Distant Partners:** With the Distant Partner model, any faith or community group, regardless of location, can help a refugee family gain greater stability by providing essential financial support for basic needs.

LSS provides presentations, training for volunteers, ongoing support for volunteers, and other coordination as needed throughout the six-month commitment.

## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Please reach out directly to Cate Duin, LSS Program Supervisor, at [cate.duin@lssmn.org](mailto:cate.duin@lssmn.org) or 612.428.0058.