GRATITUDE REPORT
Bridge Refugee Services 2019-20
2019-2020

WE ARE GRATEFUL

It was a year for the ages, but you made sure refugees had all they needed.

Dear friends,

What a year it has been. I know none of us anticipated all that has transpired since last year. What has remained constant, and even more urgent, is the needs of local refugees.

Thanks to you, we have been able to rise to the challenge and assist refugees through the current coronavirus crisis, providing the support they need to ultimately succeed on their own. I am proud to say we have continued to offer full services for our clients, even welcoming a few new arrivals, although travel restrictions severely impacted our estimated numbers for the year. We could not have done this without faithful staff, our board of directors, volunteers, donors and partners organizations who made it possible.

Private donations have been particularly important during this time, because our federal funds by and large do not allow for direct financial support to clients who are experiencing illness, job loss or other emergency situations. Your contribution made sure refugees were housed, fed, provided with the technology resources they needed to support their entry into a new virtual world and kept safe and secure during a time when it was significantly more difficult for them to support themselves.

In addition, we were able to launch new community garden and youth mentorship programs. And we look forward to new opportunities. The number of new arrivals is expected to grow significantly, post-COVID. We are seeking to expand our programming for particularly vulnerable clients to provide support and a sustainable path to self-sufficiency. That means learning English, making a household budget, paying their own bills, fulfilling career goals, finding friends and contributing in the community. We will continue working with clients to improve technology literacy, equipping them for the new realities of a virtual world. And we will work to take the lessons we have learned from the past year and continue to build capacity, efficiency and best practices for the months and years to come. Thank you so much for being a vital part of this work.

A most happy and blessed new year to you all.

Douglass, Esperanza & Angie from Colombia, were among those Bridge assisted during the past year.

Drocella Mugorewera
Executive director
STANDING IN THE GAP

When Esperanza and her daughter, Anggie, and son Douglas escaped the violence of their home country of Colombia, they found a new life in Chattanooga.

The family had been forced to relocate after Esperanza received threats, after which a woman who resembled her was found murdered. They arrived in the U.S. in February, 2019, and Bridge helped the family settle find an apartment, enroll Douglas in middle school and Anggie and Esperenza find jobs.

They settled in. They made a home.

“The food is very different, the climate is very different, the language is very different,” says Anggie. “But things are a lot more peaceful here.”

Life got tough again when Esperanza injured her foot and needed surgery, depleting the family's small savings. Then COVID-19 hit in March, and Anggie lost her job at the local Volkswagen plant.

They reached out for help, and that’s where you come into the story. Thanks to your generosity, Bridge was able to assist Anggie and Esperanza with paying their rent and utilities and covering healthcare costs during the months they were without income. Bridge also helped them find new jobs and get back on their feet.

Without that assistance, “in reality, I don’t know what would have happened,” Anggie says.

“We love you with all our hearts,” says Esperanza, and we are very thankful for what you have done for us. You are our family.”
"LIKE A MIRACLE"

It’s been quite a year for Emmanuel. His family—wife Riziki and eight children—fled from war in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2005. After fifteen years of living in a Rwandan refugee camp, the couple and six of their children traveled to Knoxville to begin a new life.

“I never knew I would ever come to the U.S.,” Emmanuel says. “It was just like a miracle.”

The family arrived in Knoxville days before the city shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic. For the past six months, they have settled into a strange new world.

Confined to their apartments, the younger children were unable to go to school. They relied on Bridge staff and volunteers to deliver food and supplies and provide needed information (via phone and video chat) about receiving social security cards and healthcare benefits. Those who potentially could be employed have had to wait, and services for other members have been delayed.

But Emmanuel’s family has been surrounded by a supportive community, many of whom they will never meet.

Someday, Emmanuel hopes to go to English classes, visit friends from the refugee camp in other states and even get a job—“I used to sew shoes,” he said, “I would like to get a job where I can use my hands.”

Late last year, Emmanuel and Riziki’s daughter gave birth to a baby girl—the family’s first member to be a U.S. citizen. When asked how he felt about this, Emmanuel laughed.

“We are happy,” he said.
PATH TO SUCCESS
Supporting the refugee journey

SAFETY & STABILITY
- Secure and safe housing
- Basic needs supplied
- Access to healthcare
- Cultural & community orientation
- Learning English
- Enrolling children in school
- Intensive services for clients with special needs such as elders and single mothers

SELF-SUFFICIENCY
- Have a household budget
- Start employment
- Pay bills without assistance
- Navigate the community
- Parents involved in school
- Children adjusting
- Apply for green card

SUCCESS
- Enroll in training or college
- Become a citizen
- Reunite with family
- Grow in a career
- Children integrate fully and succeed in school

SERVICE
- Volunteer
- Be a leader in the community
- Participate in civic life

IMPACT 2020
Here’s the difference you made this year

403 Total clients served: 215 in Knoxville and 188 in Chattanooga
61 New arrivals: 32 in Knoxville, 29 in Chattanooga
135 Children assisted with school-related services
100+ Emergency COVID kits distributed
2,200 Volunteer hours served
91 Clients assisted with employment
7 Refugee gardens established for 70+ clients
67 Families receiving holiday angel deliveries
130 Grocery gift cards distributed
45 Personal laptop computers supplied to client households

FINANCIALS

2019
Revenues
Federal funding $986,901
Private funding 283,260
In-kind Donations 204,635

Direct refugee assistance 509,845

Support services
Personnel 636,255
Occupancy 129,902
Contract labor 30,255
Supplies 14,792
Equipment rent 6,268
Telephone 15,565
Audit/legal expense 29,394
Staff training & conferences 19,942
Other 9,340
Fundraising 6,649

2020
Revenues
Federal funding $989,818
Private funding 359,469
In-kind Donations 174,074

Direct refugee assistance 378,564

Support services
Personnel 699,721
Occupancy 57,019
Contract labor 43,876
Supplies 31,670
Equipment rent 11,467
Telephone 19,008
Audit/legal expense 10,000
Staff training & conferences 8,379
Other 14,904
Fundraising 31,833
THANKING YOU

Our faithful donors

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