ANNUAL REPORT
2016

Knoxville
Tel: (865)540-1311
3839 Buffat Mill Rd
Knoxville, TN 37909

Chattanooga
Tel: (423)954-1911
4791/A Hal Drive
Chattanooga, TN 37416

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEES TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES, AFTER SUFFERING PERSECUTION, SO THAT THEY BECOME PRODUCTIVE, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.

www.bridgerefugees.org
Bridge Refugee Services, Inc is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization
The year of 2016 has been a great induction year for me in the refugee resettlement program. From the bottom of my heart, I thank the clients for their courage and trust they manifested to the staff, welcoming communities, and volunteers who helped them to build their new lives. I witnessed clients’ advancement in learning English and navigating the US system to sustain their families through employment. I was amazed by the many clients who moved from “no English” level to “I speak little English”. That could not happen without the collaboration between clients, volunteers, English class teachers, tutors and staff. It is encouraging to see people starting from scratch and being able to pay their bills by themselves four months after their arrival in US. The refugee resettlement program is a good development model which can inspire other programs supporting low income families.

I extend my gratitude to all of you who opened your hearts, hands, minds, and pockets to support our new neighbors and friends in East Tennessee. Your love, kindness, and generosity gave hope to refugees. By empowering them, they regained the ability to dream again, integrate in our communities and give back through employment, services, and volunteering. All the people who worked closely with refugees will say “We are alike”!

To the donors, Board members, staff, welcome teams, interpreters, the medical and behavior health providers, teachers, landlords, employers, participants in the Quarterly Community Consultation, all who made references, and all community stakeholders; thank you for your collaboration and support. Our partnership will continue to increase and we will reach out and organize events, and engage together in order to build strong communities.

The thank you notes/cards we received and other words of appreciation energized our teams both in Knoxville and Chattanooga. With sincere appreciation,

Drocella Mugorewera
Executive Director
Officers

Susan Speraw, PhD, RN (Chair), Retired Research Professor, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and founding Director, Global Disaster Nursing Graduate Programs. Dr. Speraw’s career bridged two disciplines: nursing and clinical psychology. For over 45 years, she provided direct health care services to vulnerable families. This included decades serving migrant populations, including Vietnamese, Thai, and Laotian refugees; women and children fleeing guerilla warfare in Central America; and undocumented migrant farm workers from Mexico. Additionally, she has led numerous medical trips to remote villages in Haiti. Other populations that have been the focus of her long career include families who have children with complex disabilities, chronic and terminal conditions, mental health problems, overwhelming stress, and/or low literacy. She has been involved with Bridge for six years, on the board for four years, and assumed the role of Chair in spring 2015. She resides in Signal Mountain, just outside Chattanooga.

Daphne Kirksey (Vice-Chair), with special expertise in community relations and communications, has served on the Bridge board for a decade. During that time she has worked extensively in government, and government relations, as a staff member in the office of a member of the United States Congress. She now works in municipal services, on the staff of Tennessee American Water. She lives and works in the Chattanooga area.

Leah Berry (Secretary), has served on the Bridge board of directors for five years. She is Division Manager for Business Services at Strata-G, LLC, providing logistics analysis and contract support to government and commercial clients. Her technical expertise includes process improvement, quality control and audits, Best Practices management, security management, customer service, and logistics oversight. In addition to participation in Strata-G’s community outreach supporting Knox Area Rescue Ministries, Ms. Berry is Past President of the Farragut Rotary Club, Rotary District 6780 International Grants Coordinator, and a supporter and former guardian for World War II veterans on Knoxville’s Honor Air Flights to Washington, D.C. She holds a degree in Marketing from the University of Tennessee. She resides in Knoxville.

Sonal Modi, CPA (Treasurer), is Business Operations Manager and Financial Analyst at Tennessee American Water. With over twenty years of experience in auditing, finance, and taxation, in both Mumbai, India and the United States, she brings a wealth of expertise in financial management to the Bridge board. She is licensed as a Certified Public Accountant in Tennessee. Her education includes an undergraduate degree and advanced graduate studies in Commerce, all from the University of Mumbai, India. She resides in Chattanooga.

Directors

Carrie DiMemmo, is a professional grant-writer, and has worked in Europe and the United States, guiding fundraising and development for major foundations and philanthropic groups. She was one of the original volunteers at Bridge Refugee Services, and has been a faithful supporter for decades. She lives with her family in Chattanooga.

Martin Lester, J.D., holds a law degree from Yale University School of Law, and specializes in immigration law and criminal defense. During his career, he has served as public defender and has maintained private practice in Virginia, Florida and Tennessee. He has been admitted to the following Bars Associations: United States Supreme Court; United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit; United States Court of Federal Claims; United States District Court, Eastern District of Tennessee; United States District Court, Northern District of Florida; United States District Court, Eastern District of Virginia; United States District Court, Western District of Virginia; State of Tennessee; State of Florida. Mr. Lester resides in Chattanooga.
Lauren Oppizzi, MSN, RN, holds a master’s degree in Global Disaster Nursing from the University of Tennessee College of Nursing in Knoxville, and is currently pursuing nursing doctoral studies there, specializing in delivery of healthcare to refugees and vulnerable, displaced groups who have survived forced migration. She is a certified cardiovascular nurse, stroke specialist, and currently also serves as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Tennessee. She has been the recipient of numerous awards for clinical excellence, academic scholarship and professional promise. She has spent time traveling and working in Africa. Her community service has been directed to major public health efforts in remote areas of rural Appalachia, where she volunteered thousands of hours to a project which succeeded in bringing a permanent fresh water source to a population of isolated families who were previously forced to use heavily polluted water. She lives in Knoxville.

Margaret Scobey, recently retired from the U.S. Foreign Service after a 32-year career. She served as U.S. Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt from 2008 until July 2011, having previously served as the U.S. Ambassador to Syria from late 2003 until early 2005, when she was recalled in protest to the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. During her career, Ambassador Scobey served as Political Counselor in Baghdad, 2006-2007, and Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from September 2001 through November 2003, Deputy Chief of Mission in Sanaa, Yemen, as well as earlier assignments in Jerusalem, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Peru. In the Department of State, Ambassador Scobey served as staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Near East and South Asian Affairs, Watch Officer in the Operations Center, Political-Military Officer in the Office of Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs, Deputy Director of the Secretariat Staff, and Director of the Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs. Ambassador Scobey graduated with a degree in History from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she also received her Master’s Degree. She pursued doctoral studies in History at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor before joining the Foreign Service. Ambassador Scobey is recipient of the U.S. Department of State award for Distinguished Service and a Presidential Award. She lives in Knoxville.

Rev. Nathan Tarr, MDiv, MTH, is Pastor, Christ Church Knoxville, where he has served since 2005. He is also Instructor in Humanities at Paideia Academy in Knoxville and Director of a discipleship program for men seeking to discern their ministry calling. A graduate of Wheaton College (IL), Nazarene Theological Seminary (MO), King’s College and Seminary (CA), and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (KY), he is now pursuing doctoral work in Biblical Spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (KY). During his years of ministry, Rev. Tarr and his family have engaged in mission work in Africa, South America and across Europe. Through his leadership, the Romanian Pastor’s College was launched in Romania, and training for pastors ministering to the marginalized Roma people was achieved. He has been honored for his academic achievements, and published and presented worldwide on topics related to spirituality.

Erik J. Zilen, is an entrepreneur, involved in business start-ups since 2006, and the Owner and Operator of Niedlov’s Breadworks in Chattanooga since 2012. In addition to overseeing all elements of Niedlov’s daily operations and product development, he also is responsible for branding; sales and community outreach; marketing; media relations; strategic planning; bookkeeping, inventory and cost management; and facilities maintenance. Previously, he was Accounting Manager for Unum, and Director of Economic Development for Create Here, both business entities based in Chattanooga. Beginning in 2008, he was employed by Bridge for three years as a Case Manager, where he worked directly with Bridge clients. He has maintained his connection to Bridge and serves as an advocate for refugees, seeking ways to increase refugee employment opportunities within the business community. He is a graduate of Eastern University in PA.
A Special Thank You to Our Donors 2016

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Thomas & Marie Well
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William L. Philips
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Sara Holladay
Savanna Norrod
Shelley Litchfield
Spanish Language Solutions, Inc
St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church
St. Thaddaeus Episcopal Church
Ted Smith
Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
Meet Our Staff
Chattanooga

Marina Peshterianu, Associate Director

Ryan Miller, Case Manager

Angel Daugherty, Senior Case Manager/Wilson Fish Coordinator

Jennifer Croxall, Pre-Arrival Specialist/School Liaison

Alexandria Palacio, Case Manager

Valerie Brite, AmeriCorps Volunteer Manager

This year was characterized by many family reunification cases, bringing together families, after years of waiting. We also strengthened our volunteer program through AmeriCorps Volunteer Manager, Valerie Brite.
This year has brought a lot of change in staff and added professionalism. Bridge Refugees Services in Knoxville was able to bring on new case managers, an assistant case manager, and partnered with AmeriCorps Volunteer to hire a Volunteer Manager.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRIDGE REFUGEE SERVICES STATISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>155</strong> Arrivals in Chattanooga in 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>79%</strong> Percentage of arrivals that were families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35%</strong> Percentage of arrivals under age 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>49%</strong> Percentage of arrivals who are female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22%</strong> Percentage of arrivals from Central America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>56%</strong> Percentage of arrivals from the Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>97</strong> Volunteers in the fiscal year, serving 3 hours a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Cosponsorship groups working with families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong> Interns helped support our operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>34</strong> Clients employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Kids enrolled in School Case Management program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong> Clients enrolled in elders program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Year Highlights: Chattanooga**

*Culture Fest* - On October 4, Bridge participated in Culture Fest, Chattanooga’s premiere showcase of international communities and largest annual celebration of local cultures.
October 4-5, Bridge Chattanooga served as a sponsoring agency for OneBeat’s community events (organization that brings together emerging musical leaders from around the world to collaboratively create original work and to develop a global network of civically engaged music initiatives). Bridge’s client, Abdu, a refugee from Sudan, pictured on the bottom right, performed with the musicians of One Beat and refugees from Iraq and Sudan came to enjoy beautiful music and international food.

From the streets of Chattanooga, Michael Rice has a vision for his coffee roasting company. "My wife and I were in the coffee trade in India and we unexpectedly came face to face with refugees." They named their business Mad Priest and their only employees: refugees. "We thought what is the most empowering way to welcome them into our community and give them an opportunity so they aren’t just working a production job the rest of their life."

Chattanooga’s Bridge Refugee Services matched them with their first employee, and while the business wants to protect his privacy they are happy to talk about what he brings to work every day. "He’s one of most dependable and hardworking employees I’ve ever worked with."

For the past few months, Mad Priest has turned out 150 pounds of coffee a week and they say that number will only grow.

**Latin Festival** – On April 30, Bridge participated in the Latin Festival. Latin Festival is a community celebration of diversity and inclusion. Food, music, dancing: it is a great way to spend a day and learn about your international neighbors. The event’s proceeds go to the Chattanooga State’s Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language Programs offered in Highland Park since 2001. Many refugees benefited from this program over the years and Bridge is a proud participant of this event.

**Samaritan Center backpack project** – Bridge partnered with The Samaritan Center to provide backpacks and school supplies to newly arriving school-aged children. As a result, 31 refugee children received a brand-new backpack to get to a good start!
Bus Donated to be used as Clothing Closet:
Within one day we had two wonderful highlights—first Jennifer Ward and Macy Halladay independently fund-raised $500 worth of diapers, wipes and playpen for the wonderful babies that arrived the previous month. Second, Melanie Beckmann, owner of local daycare Littlebug’s Learning Leaf, donated their bus. This bus is being turned into a mural honoring refugees and a mobile clothing closet for clients.

Staff Retreat 2016
Our entire staff (Knoxville and Chattanooga) met for a brainstorming and team building retreat. We have lots of exciting plans for next year and a great team to get the job done!

Free International Clinics
Bridge Refugee Services Knoxville
Partnered with KIN (Knoxville International Network), and Wallace Care Mobile to host several International Health Clinics throughout the year.

Lunch and Learns
Partnering with Compassion Coalition and Knoxville Internationals Network, several luncheons discussing Refugee Resettlement in Knox County were hosted in 2016. Topics included: Knoxville, a city of refuge for internationals, the vetting and entry process, volunteer and welcoming opportunities, success stories, and a time for Q&A.

National Philanthropy Day
Executive Director Drocella Mugorewera and Margaret Scobey, American diplomat and former United States Ambassador to Egypt and Syria, also attended the luncheon.

Bridge Refugee Services participated in The Great Smoky Mountain Chapter of Association of Fundraising Professional’s Celebration Luncheon for National Philanthropy Day. We were very proud to have Rev. Pat Polis as our “2016 Philanthropy Day Table Honoree.”

ESL Camp
Bridge Refugee Services partnered with Cedar Springs Refugee Ministry to host an ESL Camp for 6 weeks during the summer. This camp included our refugee students from grades 5-12, and focused on hands-on learning activities, chances to practice English, and engage in small classroom learning experiences.
Year Highlights: Knoxville

Christmas Stockings for Refugee Children!
We thank Windy and Jim Harley for spearheading a stocking drive in the Knoxville stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and the community. Windy, with the help of some trusted volunteers, collected, assembled, and distributed 89 stockings, and 77 bundles of rice, beans, and flour to our clients.

Citizenship Day & Welcoming Week
Mayor Rogers celebrating Citizenship Day and Welcoming Week with two freshly arrived refugees, Micky and Mahmood.

Refugee Leader Training
In October, Adamou Mohamed, a Grassroots Organizer with Church World Service, provided a training to our clients on how to tell their stories and organize themselves to become strong leaders in the community.

Refugee Congress:
Drocella was asked to be a delegate from Tennessee to the Refugee Congress. Our Executive Director, Drocella Mugorewera, is representing the Refugee Congress at the National Immigration Integration Conference being held in Nashville.

BRIDGE REFUGEE SERVICES STATISTICS
KNOXVILLE 2016

267 Arrivals in Knoxville in 2016
91% Percentage of arrivals that were families

49.4% Percentage of arrivals under age 18

50.01% Percentage of arrivals who are female

56.5% Percentage of arrivals from African nations

33.7% Percentage of arrivals from the Middle East

73 Volunteers in the fiscal year, serving 3 hours a week

4 Interns helped support our operations

66 Clients employed enrolled in Match Grant

98% Employable families had one member employed

86 Kids enrolled in Knox County Schools
Kim Mason's Story
(Aspirant to the Unitarian Universalist Ministry; Meadville Lombard Theological School)

As a first year seminary student I was required by my school to volunteer 8 hours a week at a local non-profit. I was familiar with the work of Bridge and wanted to learn more about the needs and issues around refugee settlement in the US. As a former Sunday school director I am comfortable in an educational role, so Bridge asked me to lead cultural orientation classes for new arrivals. The material is both so basic and yet so extensive that we had to break it down into four sessions, and sessions sometimes went as long as 2 hours. It was a privilege to be part of the journey of so many New Americans as they learned the ins and outs of their new home and culture. It takes many years to get accustomed to living in a new country and my hope and goal was that I could make that transition in some part easier for Bridge clients. One of the best illustrations I can offer of this is teaching about our patriotic customs. We taught things like how to show respect for the US flag and about the 4th of July. Clients would ask questions about how to sing the Star Spangled Banner, how to say the Pledge of Allegiance, what would be on the citizenship test and how soon could they take it or if they could sign up for military service. They are invested in being here and making new lives as Americans. At the same time they would thank me for warning them about the fireworks on the 4th of July, often saying that they would think the sounds of explosions were a bomb...

For refugees, coming to the US is literally an act of saving them and their children's lives.

Lee Ann Mills’ Story

Since I began volunteering for Bridge Refugee Services eighteen months ago my life has become richer. Beginning with my first contact with Bridge I felt warmly welcomed and part of the team. The jobs I do are varied. For new arrivals I help with setting up homes and shopping for food and household items. I provide transportation for client appointments and help with special events.

But I wanted to do more. All of the clients I worked with were Arabic speakers and I thought, why do I have to ask them to learn my language? Why can't I learn to communicate with them in theirs? So I signed up for Arabic classes at a local language school and three clients who I help with English are tutoring me. English competency is critical for finding a better job or enrolling in college or a vocational program and their English skills improve as they teach me Arabic. They are thrilled that I am learning their language. I am thankful that I found Bridge Refugee Services and these friendships through my new language.
Lucie's Story:

Lucie left behind a history of suffering in Africa. Her parents had fled Burundi to a refugee camp in the Congo, where Lucie was born. After her father and brothers were killed there, her mother moved her family to Tanzania. There, Lucie's mother and sister died, and Lucie was forced to marry young in order to survive in the refugee camp. “I got married because I didn't have anyone to help me, because in a refugee camp to find water or food is not easy as just one person.”

Now, Lucie has a secure life in Chattanooga, US citizenship, and even a house she owns. Through self-initiative and two years of volunteering with Habitat for Humanity in the neighborhood in which she now resides, Lucie earned the keys to her own home in November 2016.

Lyubov's Story

I am a Ukrainian refugee and a new American. My name is Lyubov Pustenka. My first name actually means love in Ukrainian. I am a believer that God is love and I am forever grateful for the amazing opportunity I have been given and the love I have been shown in this great country. I grew up in the former Soviet Union where atheism ruled and waiting in bread lines with a coupon was a way of life. We would hide in houses of fellow Christians for church services and hidden underground structures.

It was early on that the local soviet government discovered that we were Christian. They attempted to take our daughter from us and even our neighbors in our commune stood against us. They would raid our home looking for Bibles and tap our phones regularly. We faced constant harassment and our children did too. Our son and daughter were brought before the local school board and asked to denounce Christianity. This was life as we knew it and it was hell. My husband and I knew that there was a land where we could one day be free and our children would not have to face the extreme persecution that they had faced growing up.
World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day Chattanooga:
On June 17, Bridge Chattanooga hosted a World Refugee Day Open House celebration focused on volunteer/co-sponsor/community appreciation and more than 60 individuals attended this event.

World Refugee Day Knoxville:
On June 18th, Bridge Knoxville partnered with Knoxville Internationals Network, and the Knoxville Community to host a World Refugee Day festival at the Bridge office which included a celebration of 400 people from the community and our clients. The community support, of food and supplies, helped to support the event and welcome our refugees. There was dancing, donated t-shirts, donated food and food prepared by our clients, welcoming speeches from our mayors, Madeline Rogero and Tim Burchett, and games for the whole family.
Revenues 2016

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<td>B. Chattanooga</td>
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<td>C. National</td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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Expenditures

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<tr>
<td>Fundraising/Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
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</table>

Three Ways to Donate

Want to help? We’ve made it easy!

1. **Online**
   - Go to our website www.bridgerefugees.org and donate via the ‘Donate’ tab.

2. **Cash or Check**
   - We accept cash at community events, or check. Please mail your donation to either one of our offices.

3. **In Kind Donations**
   - We appreciate donations of items for refugees’ homes. Contact us if you have items you want to donate.

Your Donation Matters: How Can You Welcome Refugees?

Donations are tax deductible to extent allowed by law.
Local Partners:
Adventist Moslem Friendship Association (AMFA)
Alliance for Better Non-Profits
Catholic Charities
Center for Nonprofits
Chamber of Commerce
Chattanooga State Community College
Cherokee Health Systems
Churches and places of worship
City of Chattanooga Office of Multicultural Affairs
Compassion Coalition
Department of Human Services
Habitat for Humanity
Hamilton County Baptist Association
Hamilton County Department of Education
Hamilton County Health Department
INVEST
Knox County Schools
Knox County
Knox County Health Department
Knoxville Internationals Network
Local thrift stores, and clothing closets
Samaritan Center
Southern Adventist University
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
Tennessee Immigrant Empowerment Solutions
The City of Knoxville
The Muslim Community of Knoxville
Appalachian State University
University of Tennessee
University of Tennessee in Chattanooga
Volunteer East Tennessee
Wallace Mobile Healthcare, Inc

National Agencies & Funders

Bridge Refugee Services Partners