“I just wanted to stay somewhere there was a job, life and protection,” he says.

War-torn Sudan seems a world away from the quiet apartment in East Chattanooga Mohamed and Ibrahem now call home. The journey has been nothing short of incredible.

Mohamed, gracious and polite, quietly tells how local raids forced him to abandon the family farm. He then escaped, twice, from wretched conditions, beatings and constant threat of murder in the infamous refugee camp of
Ibrahem, charismatic and a natural storyteller, speaks of how he was arrested and beaten for refusing to fight in Sudan’s ongoing civil war.

“I told them, ‘These are my people. How do I fight my own people?’” he says. He likely wouldn’t have survived the ordeal if not for a sympathetic jailer who helped him escape.

The Impact of Interns

Meet Katy! She’s one of the first friendly faces refugees see upon arrival to their Knoxville home. Since October, she has been serving as an intern with Bridge, providing the cultural orientation classes required within the early days of their arrival.

Interns like Katy are crucial to helping support Bridge case managers who struggle with heavy caseloads, and the many federally-mandated tasks that must be completed within refugees’ first 90 days.

Culture Corner

Baladi bread is a Sudanese bread. In Sudan, bread is a staple with most meals. Click the image above to learn how to cook this dish from Omer, the son of Sudanese doctors living in the UK.

Image credit: Omer Eltigani, Sudanese Kitchen
Kirsten Cole, Bridge Refugee Services' Knoxville School Liaison, attended the Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition's 2019 Education Summit & Day on the Hill. Pictured is Representative Ryan Williams, District 42; Gini Pupo-Walker- Senior Director of Education Policy & Programs at Conexión Américas; a fellow Summit attendee, and Kirsten Cole.

Executive Director Drocella Mugorewera: Celebrating 10 years in America
"Ten years ago, I came to the United States and was warmly welcomed by a Bridge Refugee Services Case Manager with a delegation from Northside Christian Church. It had been a long and painful journey, but I was full of hope. During that time of adversity, I remained faithful."
Oscar-nominated director Nadine Labaki’s latest film follows the story of a young boy living in the slums of Beirut. Zain Al Rafeea, the child actor, was a Syrian refugee discovered at a street casting.

Image credit: Mehdi Chebil, FRANCE 24

Upcoming Events

Knoxville
March 11th
Community Assistance Info Meeting
6pm
Mar 27th
Volunteer Orientation
5:30 - 7pm
Mar 27th
Sweet P’s BBQ Taste & Toast
6:30pm

Chattanooga
March 12th
Volunteer Orientation
11am-12pm

(Top) Drocella Mugorewera was honored with a Peacemaker Award by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. She is the second honoree from Bridge; last year, Summer Awad, our Intensive Case Manager received the honor. And this year Seema Singh-Perez, (right of Drocella) a Knoxville councilwoman and Bridge volunteer with our men’s and women’s groups also received the award. (Center) Terry Reed from Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Knox County CAC spoke to our clients about taxes and how to avoid scams aimed at refugees and immigrants.

We wish a warm welcome to Hannah Mask! Hannah is joining the Chattanooga office as the Volunteer and Community Manager.
Staff & Board Retreat 2019
Bridge board and staff members spent a weekend retreat working on a strategic plan and highlighting priorities for the future. “The most valuable part of coming together as an entire organization,” says Board Chair Martin Lester, “was the chance for the staff and the Board to work together as a team to plan Bridge’s future. For me personally, it was very gratifying to see that we have a strong and solid organization that will continue to serve refugees and our communities.”

We are thankful for such a dedicated team of individuals committed to welcoming refugees and asylees to East Tennessee. Thank you to Jerry Askew and Elle Benson from the Alliance for Better Non-profits for their guidance.

Thank you to our sponsors

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