

**Refugees are a Resource for the Future
Not a burden of the Present, Without any Future**

Who are Refugees?

Refugees are individuals or families who seek safety outside their country because of well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or because of political opinions.

MYTH 1

Refugees Come Here For Economic Reasons

FACT: Refugees are individuals or families who come here because they had to flee their homeland and are unable to return because of persecution or fear of persecution. Most refugees would rather live and work in their native country.

MYTH 2

The U.S. is the Only Country to Take Refugees

FACT: There are over a dozen countries involved in refugee resettlement; some of the major countries are: Australia, Canada, France, Israel, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Refugee admissions to the U.S. total fewer than $\frac{1}{3}$ of one percent of the U.S. population each year.

MYTH 3

Refugees Automatically Receive Special Money From the U.S. Government.

FACT: The U.S. government does not automatically provide refugees with money when they arrive here in the country. However, there are benefits available for needy refugees. The refugees must apply for these benefits and meet an income and resource test to qualify for any assistance just as U.S. applicants do.

MYTH 4

Refugees Do Not Pay Taxes.

FACT: Refugees pay taxes the same as any citizen living in the United States. They pay federal and state taxes, and local taxes. There are no special rules which give refugees a tax break.

MYTH 5

Refugees Take Jobs From Americans

FACT: Refugees must apply and compete for jobs the same as any citizen or resident alien. Refugees also make jobs. They open new businesses that employ-refugees as well as others living in the community. Refugees bring new energy and creativity into U.S. communities.

MYTH 6

The U.S. Spends Millions of Dollars Every Month Supporting Refugees.

FACT: Statistics have shown that the tax contribution of refugees is considerably greater than the cost of services they use. Refugees also increase the community's tax base because they purchase goods and services from the local community.

MYTH 7

Refugees Do Not Contribute or Participate in this Society.

FACT: Refugees contribute a great wealth to this country through their culture and customs. They are also a great resource. Many significant scientists, artists and community leaders came here as refugees.

MYTH 8

Refugees do not want to learn English.

FACT: Most refugees want to learn English and enroll in classes to study English as a Second Language (ESL).

MYTH 9

Refugees All Are On Welfare

FACT: There is no “welfare” in Wisconsin or in the United States (since 1996). Instead, there are Job Development Programs. People may be provided a small amount of money per month as long as they are working or in a short-term program leading to employment. In Wisconsin we call this program W-2 (Wisconsin Works). The old “entitlement programs” such as the well-known AFDC Program no longer exist.

MYTH 10

The Refugees Have Their Way Paid To The U.S.

FACT: The refugees borrow money from an account originally created in the late 1940's. At the end of World War II over a dozen countries created the fund for the purpose of helping “Displaced Persons” to relocate from the devastation of their homelands and the recently created “Iron Curtain” which cut off return for millions of people. The fund continues to offer loans to refugees who sign a promissory note to repay the loan. They do not pay interest and they have years to repay. The fund isn't refunded; it must be self sustaining with repayments from those who borrow travel loan money. Non-payments are turned over to collection agencies. However, the repayment level is quite high.

MYTH 11

Refugees Bring In Diseases

FACT: Refugees usually are in camps which have health care provided by the International Red Cross, the United Nations, health care providers from the country which is giving them safe haven and often by philanthropic groups including Faith-Based Organizations. When a refugee is screened for admittance into any refugee resettlement program he or she is screened to meet the particular requirements of that country. Refugees have a chest x-ray, undergo immunizations, and have various blood work-ups to rule out drug use and infectious diseases. Local health departments are alerted to refugee arrivals in their communities so that they might provide follow-up services especially for those with non-contagious conditions which require treatment and to continue immunizations.

MYTH 12

Churches Bring Refugees Into Local Communities

FACT: Refugee resettlement is a program operated by the US government. Each year the President issues a Presidential Determination which establishes for the following year the number of refugees to be admitted and from which regions of the world. Resettlement is carried out as a function of the US Dept. of State along with the Dept of Homeland Security. Teams conduct interviews to determine eligibility for the US Program. Refugee resettlement is both a humanitarian gesture and part of US foreign policy. Once the government places refugees into the system to come to the US the responsibility for assisting them locally is sub-contracted to organizations which function from a humanitarian mission. Most of the domestic resettlement of refugees is carried out by religious organizations. A few organizations have ethnic ties to the refugees. The local agencies (called voluntary agencies) operate with a modest budget from the Dept of State. They are responsible for extensive pre-arrival and post-arrival services. They work closely with the resettlement communities to coordinate services to insure that refugees are received, welcomed and assisted as they begin their adjustment to a new land and culture.

Community-based refugee resettlement carries on a time-honored tradition in the United States where newcomers are received and assisted by those who came before. This is the reason that many insurance companies were formed, why fraternal organizations began and ethnic churches and societies thrived in northeast Wisconsin well into the twentieth century. Society is not static; it is dynamic. Communities change and grow and adapt. Otherwise, communities shrivel and die.