

Coming together to address our local refugee crisis

The greater Seattle area is one of the biggest destinations for refugees from the war in Afghanistan. Thousands have already settled in the King County area and dozens more are arriving each week.

With the rapid US withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer the need for refugee resettlement has taken on a new scale and urgency. It has overwhelmed the organizations and systems in place to handle these newcomers.

To try and address some of this unprecedented and largely unrecognized need, the Seattle Regional Leadership Team has decided to try a new kind of approach to Non Sibi engagement.

Rather than simply organizing an event, we will be inviting the Seattle Andover community (and others!) to participate how and when they can on a range of different opportunities that address many of the diverse needs facing our new neighbors.

ANDOVER



Donations

Many families have arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs. As they work to build their lives here they need:

- Kitchen items (plates, cooking utensils, pots/pans)
- Household items (vacuum cleaners, cleaning supplies, bedding, towels)
- Furniture (beds, couches, chairs, tables)
- Technology (computers, phones, TVs)
- School supplies (stationery, backpacks, lunchboxes)

Ways to get involved

- Sourcing donations--from friends or businesses
- Managing donations--coordinating supply/demand for items
- Transporting donations

Housing

When families arrive they receive only 90 days of housing--after that they are on their own. This is a crisis in the making as there are simply not enough affordable accommodations to house the number of people who need it.

Ways to get involved:

- Identify organizations still supporting low-income/refugee housing; call on apartment complexes in Renton, Kent etc to identify available space
- Considering the state of housing in our area, this is a big challenge and will require more intensive and creative work to develop solutions.
- People with experience in real estate, property management, and housing development may be able to make big contributions here

English literacy

Many are arriving without much English or with kids who, already behind in their grades, are struggling with new language in new schools.

Ways to get involved:

- Tutoring
- Identify and maintain list of free/low cost educational resources

Technological literacy

We live in a society where access to technology and the know-how to use it has become an essential life skill. Many of these people have only a limited understanding of technology, which is compounded by varying degrees of English literacy.

Ways to get involved:

- 1:1 or 1:few technology mentorship
- Creation of simple "how to" content that can be translated
- Identify and maintain list of free/low cost educational resources

Financial literacy

Dealing with banking, household bills, methods of payment, and budgeting are all areas where people will need help and support.

Ways to get involved:

- 1:1 or 1:few financial mentorship
- Creation of simple "how to" content that can be translated
- Identify and maintain list of free/low cost educational resources

Cultural literacy

None of these families have ever lived in the United States or anywhere else outside of Afghanistan. They need help learning where and how to shop for essentials including specialty items such as halal meat.

Ways to get involved:

- Shopping trips
- Transportation including public transport and driving lessons
- Creating educational materials that can be translated

Professional development

Finding jobs is a pressing need for everyone.

Ways to get involved:

- Identify local businesses ready to hire non-English speakers
- Help with resume writing and applications
- Coaching or mentorship

Organizational and logistical support

Many of the organizations on the frontlines are small non-profits with skeleton staffs. These local community organizations need help with logistics support and organizational development.

Ways to get involved:

- The Afghan American Community of Washington (aacwashington.org) has a new partnership with World Vision to receive donations on a regular basis. They need support managing this flow and developing a simple system for matching demand/supply

Types of engagement

Episodic



Individuals or small groups come together for 2-6 hours to address a specific need.

Extended



Individuals or small groups commit to extended engagement working with a family, individual, or organization. Can last days, weeks, or months.

As needed



People with special skills or interests can sign up to be available for specialized needs as they arise.