

WHAT DOES SPONSORSHIP OF A REFUGEE FAMILY INVOLVE?

If your church decides to adopt an apartment of refugees, you need to understand that it is a real commitment, but will also be one of the greatest blessings you could have. These young people are totally new to our culture. The cultural divide is apparently enormous. They have been living in a refugee camp, with almost nothing. They are arriving in this country with only the clothing on their backs and one small bag. The apartments are completely empty and need total furnishing.

But even more importantly, these young people need mentors and friends who will faithfully be there for them, walking through this scary experience with them as they learn about the American culture. Most of them are very excited to be here, but also very afraid. It is completely different from anything they know about.

They do not know how to make toast or cereal (or probably even what they are). They don't know how to use a microwave. They don't drive and won't know how to take a bus or open a bank account. They won't understand the currency and will need help with shopping and getting around on public transportation. Your church can provide a new life for them, but most of all you can provide them with love and friendship.

You probably have already seen the list of "stuff" needed for their apartment. Their apartment rent is being paid for a few months by the Catholic Church. They will be provided with about \$100 worth of food when they first get here, but that will not last long enough, in most cases, for their food stamps to get started. So they probably will also need gift cards for food or clothing, etc.

They will need help, probably, with learning how to drive and getting a driver's license. The list goes on. Think what it would be like for you if you moved from a very simple, third-world country to the US. It would be frightening and overwhelming. But having a group of friends who love and faithfully are there to help will make all the difference for them. (Not to mention what a wonderful example of Christ's Love it is for them to see. When they learn about Christ, if they do not know Him already, they'll have a real example of what His Love is like, in what you have done for them.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (I) Assign people as coordinators of all the physical needs for the apartment – You will need to arrange for furniture to be either delivered to the apartment by the donors or picked up by a volunteer to be taken to the apartment.

- (II) Have someone also coordinate the mentoring needed, so that the immigrants are not accidentally forgotten. Talk with Linda Campbell at the Refugee Resettlement Office about what needs to be done for them and make sure they get the help they need. Linda's contact information is at the bottom of this paper.
- (III) Possibly post the list of needs on your church's website, along with the link to the 4 minute YouTube video that shows what life in a refugee camp is like. This way, no one at your church has to field all the dozens of telephone calls that are likely to result. This won't get rid of all of the calls, but might help somewhat. You can also possibly post contact information for who the donors should call to make arrangements.
- (IV) Please let Love INC know periodically about how it is going with the "adoption". We want to learn from this experience, as well, so that if the same thing occurs in the future, we'll be better able to mobilize the churches and able to help them be successful in their service. We also try to track the numbers and types of services being provided for the refugees, as much as possible, so we can see if there are other needs they might have that we can help them with.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING ON THIS COMMITMENT AND GOD BLESS YOU!

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