

# Know the Truth About Refugees

For more than 30 years, Catholic Charities in the Rockford Diocese has joined other agencies in recognizing truths about refugee resettlement, educating those who are suspicious, and providing job placement training, cultural orientation and English

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## Charitably Speaking



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classes to new arrivals. As our familiar calling reminds us, we do this because we are Catholic, not because they are. Around the world more than 30 million people have been forced from their home countries to find refuge elsewhere. Standing alone this would rank in the top 50 most populous countries, more than all of Scandinavia, or Australia or Chile. Refugees will have their own Olympic team at the 2020 summer games.

But the U.S. will admit only 18,000 refugees in fiscal year 2020, less than the population of Belvidere or Sterling, Batavia or Huntley.

Mark Grey, a professor at the Army War College, writes that “the failure of the United States to lead the world in refugee resettlement exacerbates both short- and long-term security challenges.”

Grey offers four reasons why a strong refugee program is important to our own national security:

- 1) we owe the thousands who personally aligned with us as translators, medics or soldiers;
- 2) U.S. leadership encourages other nations to resettle refugees, thereby spreading the financial cost;
- 3) resettlement means that refugees are less likely to return to conditions of persecution and retributive slaughter; and
- 4) failure to relocate refugees makes America more vulnerable to those who undermine our interests by claiming we’re unreliable allies.

Critical truths discomfort those who spread fear:

■ Refugees did not want to leave their home countries. Refugees leave because of legitimate fears for life and safety due to religious or political beliefs, their race, nationality or membership in particular social groups. Question: what would it take to make you leave your home? Even the most divisive of elections have not created refugees from the United States.

■ No refugees were involved in the 9/11 attacks. The 19 homicidal hijackers entered the United States on visas. Refugees come here to be safe from such terrorists, raise families, live in freedom, and become successful.

■ 50% of the refugee families we resettle own their own homes within five years of arrival. Most become citizens shortly after that same first five years. More than 90% of refugees become employed within 180 days of arrival, with full-time jobs and without long-term reliance on public benefits.

■ Between 2005 and 2014, resettled refugees contributed \$63 billion more to federal and state government revenues than they received. Those 10 years of heightened scrutiny because of 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the great recession, saw the per capita annual net positive fiscal effect of each resettled refugee was \$2,205, compared to the average of \$1,848 for everyone else.

Statistics may not change people’s minds. So when in doubt, remember the Holy Family were once refugees.

Please join today’s refugees on their journeys, and say, “Welcome.”

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‘Despite the burgeoning numbers of displaced peoples, the United States is admitting the fewest number of refugees in the history of the nation’s refugee resettlement program.’

— Mark Grey

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