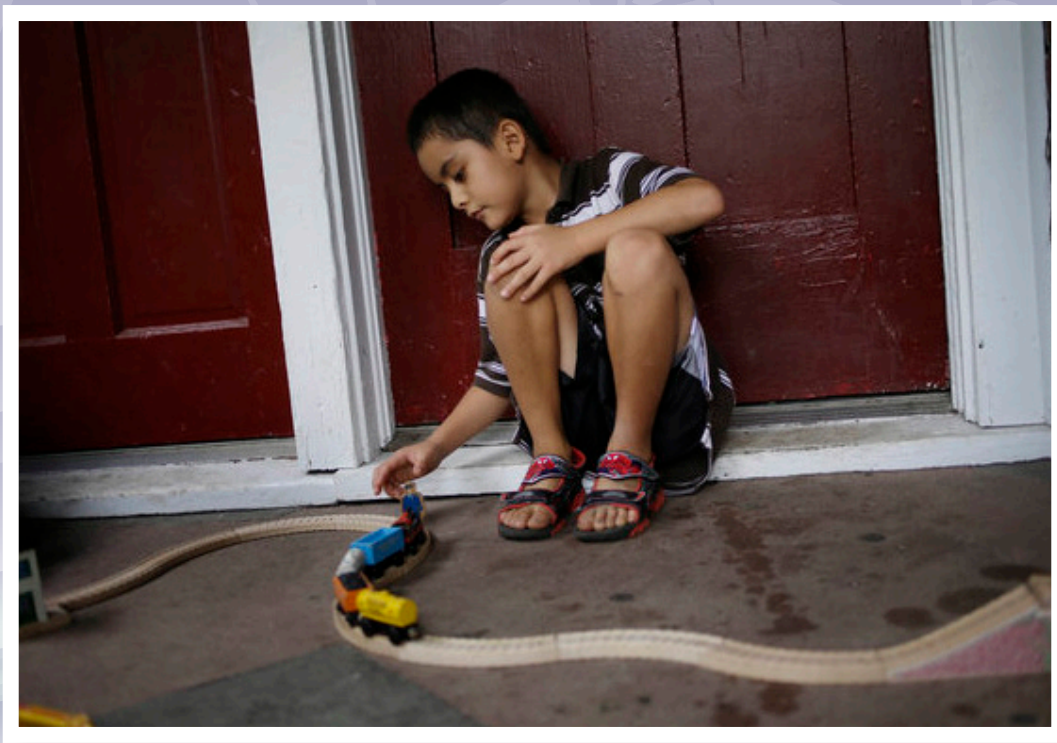


How Faith Communities in Montgomery County Can Welcome Our New Neighbors



Associated Press

*A Resource Guide for Faith Leaders
Presented by the
Faith Community Advisory Council
Neighbors in Need Working Group*



May 2016





A Message from . . . Reverend Mansfield Kaseman Interfaith Community Liaison

Our world is facing an unprecedented humanitarian challenge in addressing the plight of millions of refugees fleeing war and persecution. Scripture and the heart of every faith tradition calls us to be compassionate, to welcome the stranger and to treat one another as we would want them to treat us.

You are receiving this resource guide assuming you want your faith community to be acting upon its core beliefs in strategic ways. It is designed as a “do-it-yourself” guide with direct contact information enabling you to determine what works best for your community. I will provide updates in my bi-weekly Notes and Events, and Faith Forums with our County Executive will further empower our common mission.

In the last Faith Forum, we voted unanimously to welcome Syrian refugees and help assimilate the hundreds of children fleeing violence in Latin America. Since then some faith communities have been engaged in educational and fund raising efforts for Syrians in their homeland as well as in Montgomery County. The number of Syrians is expected to increase significantly in several months, which gives us time to prepare.

The needs of hundreds of Central American children fleeing violence, who are living in Montgomery County, is less known and more urgent. An added element of the Central American immigration crisis is the December 2015 decision by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to strictly enforce deportation orders.

We are also aware of Hindu and Sikh refugees leaving India due to religious persecution. And there is a continued flow of refugees escaping religious hostility, brutal treatment and war, particularly women and children, from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma and Bhutan, among other countries, that commands our attention.

Nonprofits and state and county programs are performing at their maximum capacity. It is incumbent upon us, as people of faith, to play a vital, complementary role. You will find many opportunities in this guide for individuals, families and faith communities to live out our faith in terms that will prove be a blessing to us all.

Faithfully,

Rev. Mansfield Kaseman
Interfaith Community Liaison
mansfield.kaseman@montgomerycountymd.gov
www.montgomerycountyinterfaithmd.org

*P.S. We would love to share stories of what your community is doing to help newcomers.
Please email them to me.*

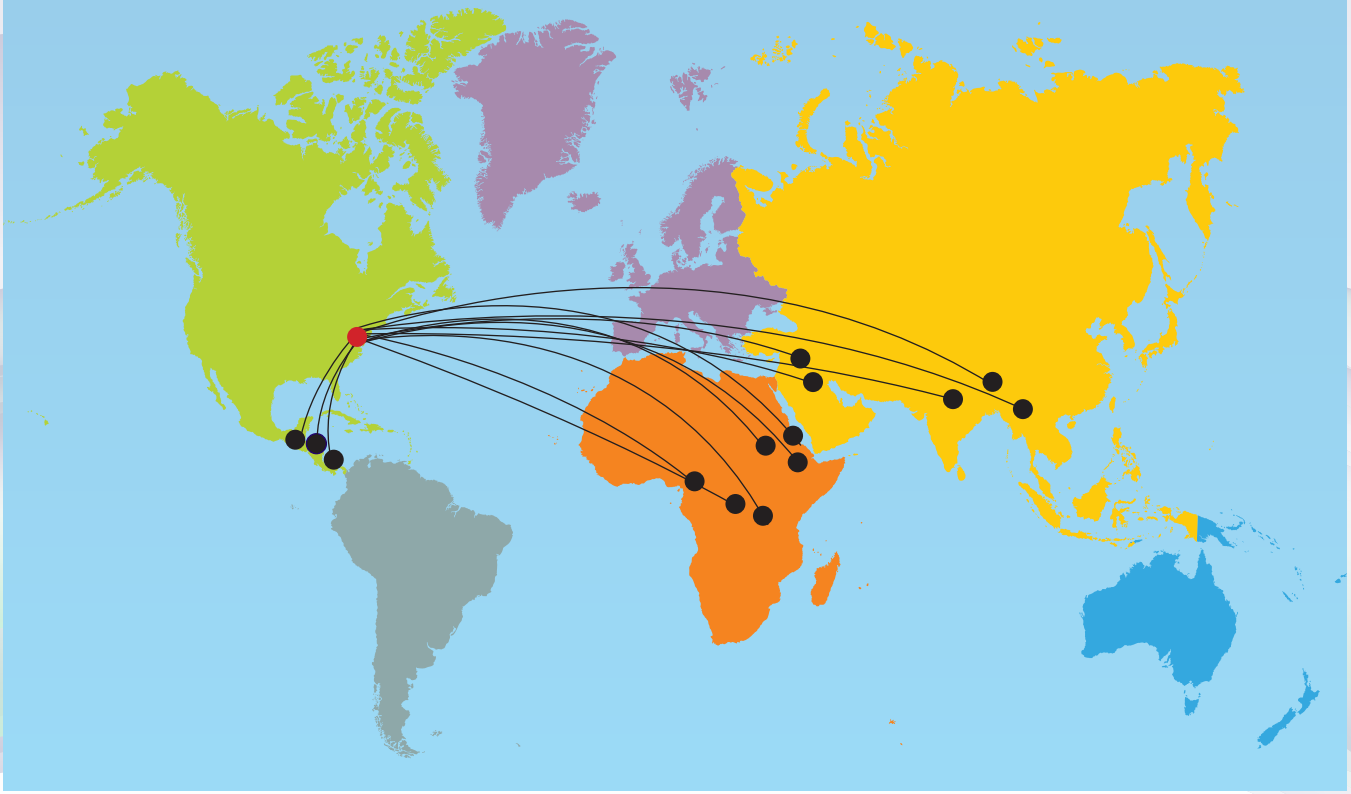
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The Need

Montgomery County welcomes refugees and asylum seekers at a greater rate than almost every jurisdiction in the state. From 2010 to 2015, Montgomery County resettled 2,256 refugees and 2,181 asylees.¹ (See map below for primary countries of origin.) To put it simply, refugees are people who apply to resettle in the U.S. from outside of the U.S. – typically when living in a neighboring country or a refugee camp. Asylum seekers are people who travel to the U.S. on their own and apply for asylum because of a well-founded fear of persecution if they return to their home country.² Asylum seekers enter as students, tourists, business people, or in an undocumented status. All official refugees and most asylees are sponsored by nonprofit resettlement agencies on behalf of the U.S. government. The refugee resettlement process generally takes from 18-24 months and the asylum process from 2-4 years.

Countries of Origin of Recent Refugee, Asylee and Migrant Arrivals in Montgomery County

Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Iraq, Sudan



¹Metcalfe, Andrew, Organizations Describe Struggles of Refugees Entering Montgomery County, Bethesda Magazine, 2/5/16 <http://www.bethesdamagazine.com/Bethesda-Beat/Web-2016/Organizations-Describe-Struggles-of-Refugees-Entering-Montgomery-County/>

²Refugees are persons granted protective status while abroad. Typically, they have been forced to flee their homeland and are unable to return. Asylees are persons granted protective status after entering the United States. Protection is granted only those who have a “credible fear” of being persecuted on any of five grounds – race, religion, nationality, social group or political stand.

Refugees receive support for up to eight months through federally-funded resettlement programs that are implemented by nonprofit resettlement agencies. These agencies supplement the Federal program through private funding. During this time, refugee families need to settle into a new residence, learn to take public transportation, go to numerous medical appointments, enroll their children in school, learn or improve their English and find a job. They face daunting cultural barriers and many are suffering from PTSD and other illnesses. Roughly 10% of refugees are seniors for whom the transition is most difficult. After the resettlement support period, they must live on their own.

Asylum seekers are often new to the community and may not have a safe place to live. They are ineligible for public benefits and it can take from 5-12 months or longer for them to receive a work permit. It can be cost prohibitive for state and country service organizations to support asylum seekers while they are going through the approval process and they often live a precarious existence in the shadows. Once granted asylum, these new residents need assistance finding better jobs, to be recertified in their career field and to improve their English, among other challenges. Like refugees, they suffer from PTSD and other illnesses.

Central Americans Fleeing Violence

In 2014, a Central American migration crisis emerged when tens of thousands of women and unaccompanied children from Central America journeyed to the United States seeking asylum due to unprecedented levels of crime and violence in their countries. From 2014-2015, over 2000 minor children were welcomed to Maryland, more per capita than any other state. The status of Central American minors is similar to that of an asylum seeker in that they are applying to stay in the U.S. because of the dangers of going home.

And do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbour from among your own people, and the neighbour who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom you rightfully possess . . .”
Islam. Qur'an 4:36

Syrian Refugees Fleeing War

While there has been a huge outpouring of support for Syrian refugees on the part of U.S. citizens, only a small number of Syrians has resettled in Maryland to date, due to the 18-24 month approval process. However, the state expects that up to 200 Syrian families will be resettled here in 2016.

Relieve people in distress as speedily as you must release a fish from a dry rill [lest he die]. Deliver people from danger as quickly as you must free a sparrow from a tight noose. Be compassionate to orphans and relieve widows. Respect the old and help the poor. Taoism. Tract of the Quiet Way



8 Ways Faith Communities Can Help Newcomers

Here are eight suggested ways that faith communities in Montgomery County can welcome new neighbors. The Faith Community Working Group and several of the resettlement agencies listed in the chart on pages 10-11 are available to visit your community and provide briefings on how to get involved.

1. Educate your community
2. Volunteer: give time and expertise
3. Raise and donate money
4. Collect and donate goods
5. Recruit immigration legal professionals
6. Be a policy advocate
7. Become a physical sanctuary
8. Foster a child fleeing violence



EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Organize educational events and activities in your faith community. Many faith communities have been successful in raising awareness through events like film nights, panel discussions, special prayer services, etc. For example, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) sets aside one Sunday a year called "Refugee and Migrant Sunday" to educate the congregation about refugees whether for fundraising, service projects or advocacy. Resource materials can be found at <http://refugeesunday.lirs.org>. See the Resources Section on pages 12 and 13 or consult one of the resettlement organizations in the chart on pages 10 and 11.

A Home Filled with Joy!

Salima, her husband, Amisi, and their five children who fled violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo lived in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya for almost six years. But they now have a home full of joy.

"My family and I, we are very well." Salima pauses, "The life I had in Goma, the life I had in Kakuma, I arrived here in the United States and I want to work hard and I am strong. Where I used to be is far away. I went through difficult times there, those 5 years . . . it's the grace of God that brought me here."



Credit: IRC, Silver Spring.



VOLUNTEER: GIVE TIME AND EXPERTISE

Nonprofits that are actively helping the immigrant population rely on volunteers to accomplish their goals and have volunteer opportunities for both groups and individuals. To identify an activity that matches your community's interests and ability, contact the organizations listed on the chart on pages 10-11 directly or search for volunteer opportunities through the Montgomery County Volunteer Center at www.montgomeryserves.org.

Examples include:

- ✓ Welcome refugees by helping set up their apartment, meeting them at the airport or preparing a welcome dinner.
- ✓ Be a mentor to help with the tasks of daily living, getting children in school or a job search.
- ✓ Provide transportation to and from appointments.
- ✓ Tutor adults and children in English and other subjects.
- ✓ Participate in deferred action or citizenship fairs to help people prepare their applications.
- ✓ Participate in voter registration drives in immigrant communities.

*Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it
Hebrews 13:1,
Christianity*



One Faith Community's Effort to Help Immigrants: Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Acts for Immigrant Justice

Last year, Cedar Lane Church in Bethesda committed to working with immigrant children and families because they believe in shaping a welcoming world and in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. They created the Cedar Lane Village Initiative (CLVI) to develop activities and relationships which would help them express these values powerfully.

Education: The church is delving into many ways to learn about immigration issues including a congregational reading and discussion of the book, *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande, and a trip to the Arizona border to directly see the challenges people face when coming into the country.

Service: Cedar Lane Church is continuing its relationship with youth and families from Viers Mill Elementary School and Einstein High School, including a Homework Club and English Conversation Club. For more details, visit <http://cedarlane.org/social-justice/cedar-lane-village.html>

Let no one deceive
another or despise
anyone anywhere,
or through anger or
irritation wish for
another to suffer. As
a mother would risk
her life to protect her
only child, even so
should you cultivate
a limitless heart with
regard to all beings.
“Karaneeya Metta
sutta”, from the
Buddha.





RAISE AND DONATE MONEY

Raise money to donate to one of the refugee and asylee support agencies listed in the chart on pages 11 and 12. Cash contributions are extremely important for supplementing Federal funding. Start with an activity at which your community has been successful, such as a donation drive or special appeal fundraiser. Some churches are creating fundraising pages on line to raise money to help refugees, which is an easy way for people to contribute.



COLLECT AND DONATE GOODS

Carry out a goods drive for such things as furniture, linens, baby and kitchen items, etc. or organize a “fill-a-backpack” project for school children. For more information or to start a goods drive, contact organizations in the chart on pages 10 and 11.

Ways To Involve Youth

Organizing a drive to collect household goods, school supplies or money is an activity that can easily be led by youth. Young people can also tutor younger children as part of a larger mentoring program organized by their faith community. An added benefit is that youth will learn new skills. If your organization is listed as an approved site for student service learning (SSL) hours by Montgomery County Public Schools on www.montgomeryserves.org, they may earn SSL hours. For example, at Lutheran Social Services, church youth groups have prepared welcome baskets for refugee families and inventoried donations.



Charity – to be moved at the sight of the thirsty, the hungry, and the miserable and to offer relief to them out of pity – is the spring of virtue. Jainism. Kundakunda, Pancastikaya 137



IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT IMMIGRATION LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

Montgomery County is in urgent need of immigration and family law attorneys (who are members of the Maryland Bar Association), particularly to assist the over 2000 unaccompanied children living in the county who are subject to deportation and whose very lives are at stake. More lawyers are also needed for adult asylum and other immigration cases. Providing pro bono legal assistance not only enables attorneys to fulfill their pro bono obligations, but it allows new attorneys to get training and experience.

The faith community can help by surveying your community, especially retirees, to identify immigration legal professionals in Montgomery County. The time commitment varies from participating in a legal clinic for three hours to taking on an entire case. Follow this link to the County's Legal Immigration Services Provider network where you can select an organization and join their pro bono legal assistance team.
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/partnerships/immigration-legalsupport.html>



FREE IMMIGRATION CLINIC

Spanish Language

*Not having enough of anything can cause one to become a miser.
African Traditional Religions. Yoruba Proverb (Nigeria) African*



BE A POLICY ADVOCATE

Many nonprofit organizations that assist newcomers have advocacy programs to promote more just and effective policies and programs. These organizations issue regular "action alerts" on immigration issues where constituents are asked to write letters or emails or call their local, state and national representatives. If your faith community decides to become involved in advocacy, visit a like-minded organization's website to sign up for action alerts or "like" an organization on Facebook

to learn about their advocacy campaigns. See the chart on pages 10 and 11 and the Resources section on pages 12 and 13 for a list of organizations doing advocacy.



Current advocacy issues on which some faith congregations have acted:

- Stop deportations: Called on President Obama to halt the inhumane deportation of refugee families with the message: "Stop the raids carried out by Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) across the country to deport refugee families. These raids are causing more harm and irreparable trauma, especially to women and children."
- Recognize Central Americans fleeing violence as refugees: Called on President Obama with the message: "We urge you to grant refugee status to Central Americans who are fleeing violence and seeking asylum in the U.S. Like other refugees around the world, they face extreme peril in returning to their home countries."
- Welcome Syrians to Maryland: Called on the State of Maryland to welcome all refugees: "We urge the State of Maryland to stand for American principles and rescind the request to the federal government to 'cease any additional settlements of refugees from Syria in Maryland.' Our nation and our state were founded to give people fleeing persecution a safe haven."
- Implement the Central American Minors Program: Urged the President and Congress to implement the federal Central American Minors (CAM) program: "We call on you to establish an in-country option for Central Americans seeking refugee status and reunification with family members in the U.S."



Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts." Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, Baha'i



BECOME A PHYSICAL SANCTUARY

Sanctuary is one of the most ancient traditions that we have as people of faith. The ancient Hebrew people allowed temples and cities to declare themselves places of refuge for persons accused of a crime. In 2014, a church-led Sanctuary Movement reemerged in the U.S. in response to the administration's targeting of asylum seekers from Central America. Churches determined that their response to the break-up of families needed to be escalated to provide safe refuge in their congregations. There is a growing list of congregations across the country that are supporting and providing sanctuary to Central Americans and other asylum seekers who are fleeing violence in their countries.



Faith communities in Montgomery County that feel strongly that some of the administration's current actions violate human rights and unjustly destroy families may want to take the next step and consider becoming a Physical Sanctuary. Being a sanctuary involves providing shelter, food, legal assistance, and other needs for immigrant families facing challenges. For more information on how your faith community can become a sanctuary, see this resource from Church World Service: <http://cwsglobal.org/?s=sanctuary&x=0&y=0>.



FOSTER A CHILD FLEEING VIOLENCE

Consider becoming a legal sponsor of an unaccompanied minor fleeing violence in Central America through the Maryland state foster program. The state's foster care website includes detailed information on the responsibilities, requirements, training, financial support and a self-assessment about considerations for becoming a foster parent. The link is http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?page_id=4800.

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:34, Judaism



Primary Organizations Assisting Newcomers . . .

ORGANIZATION		POPULATION SERVED
AYUDA 6925 Willow Street, NW, Washington, DC 20012 202-387-4848; http://www.ayuda.com		ALL (70% Latino, including Central American minors)
CASA DE MARYLAND Headquarters: (and multiple locations) 8151 15th Avenue, Hyattsville, Maryland 20783 301-431-4185; http://www.wearecasa.org		ALL, including Central American minors
CATHOLIC CHARITIES DC Headquarters: (and multiple locations) 924 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001; 202-772-4300 Montgomery County Office: Spanish Catholic Center 201 E. Diamond Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877 301-740-2523; http://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org		ALL, including Central American minors
CENTRAL AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER (CARECEN) 1460 Columbia Road, NW, Suite C-1, Washington, D.C. 20009 202-328-9799; http://www.carecencdc.org		Latino-focus, including Central American minors
ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (ECDC) Headquarters: 901 S. Highland Street, Arlington, Virginia 22204; 301-562-7303 Maryland Office: 81 Georgia Avenue, Suite 800, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 301-562-7303; http://www.ecdcus.org		ALL, including Syrians
IDENTITY 414 East Diamond Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877 301-963-5900; http://www.identity-youth.org		Latino Youth, including Central American minors
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC) Silver Spring MD Office: 8719 Colesville Road, 3rd Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 301-562-8633, Volunteer Coordinator: mark.youmans@rescue.org http://www.rescue.org/us-program/us-silver-spring		ALL Youth, including Central American minors
LATIN AMERICAN YOUTH CENTER Headquarters: 1419 Columbia Road, NW, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 319-2225 Maryland Program: Maryland Multicultural Youth Center (multiple locations) http://www.layc-dc.org/		ALL Youth, including Central American minors
LIBERTY'S PROMISE 2900-A Jefferson Davis Highway, Alexandria, Virginia 22305 703-549-9950; http://www.libertyspromise.org		Immigrant Youth, including Central American minors
LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA (LSS/NCA) Headquarters: 4406 Georgia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20011; 202-723-3000 Maryland Refugee Office 3799 East-West Highway, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782; 240-714-403 Volunteer Coord.: Jessica Cuellar, cuellarj@lssnca.org ; http://www.lssnca.org/		ALL, including Syrians

Refugees, Asylees and Children Fleeing Violence in Montgomery County, Maryland

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES	DONATIONS	LEGAL ASSISTANCE	ADVOCACY PROGRAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunities limited to administrative, communications and fundraising application and opportunities on website 	Financial	Comprehensive	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunities listed on website sign up on website 	Financial	Comprehensive	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunities for groups, individuals and corporations on website 	Financial	Comprehensive	YES* * Through https://catholic-charitiesusa.org
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> application and opportunities on website 	Financial	Comprehensive	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> volunteer application on website orientation and background check required 	Goods and Financial	None	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for information on volunteering, email: info@identify-youth.org 	Financial	None	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunities and applications for individuals and groups on website 	Goods and Financial	None	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See website 	Financial Support on AmazonSmile	None	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See new group partnership program; application on website 	Goods and	None	YES* * Through LIRS.org

Information and Resources for Assisting Newcomers

Background Information and Statistics

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: provides people in need with critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society. Site includes eligibility, services, statistics, integration and other resources. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr>

American Immigration Council: a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington D.C. with legal, education, policy and exchange programs. <http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/> (has resource page on "Unaccompanied Children". <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/unaccompanied-children-resource-page>

Migration Policy Institute: an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank in Washington, DC dedicated to analysis of the movement of people worldwide. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org>

Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees (MORA): provides support to federally-recognized refugees and political asylees to ease their integration into American society. http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?page_id=3506

Also see websites of organizations listed in the chart on pages 10 and 11.

Montgomery County Services for Newcomers: A Sampling

For a comprehensive database of public and private agencies that provide health, education and human resources services in Montgomery County, go to infoMONTGOMERY at <http://www.infomontgomery.org>

Community Ministries of Rockville: provides healthcare, emergency assistance, language outreach, elderly ministries and advocacy. <http://www.cmrocks.org>

Family Services, Inc. (FSI): provides a wide array of programs and services including integrated and behavioral health, children, youth and families, victim and domestic violence and community support services. <http://www.fs-inc.org/>

Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity: Montgomery County's immigrant resource center with information about government and community resources and classes in English, computers and citizenship preparation. Four sites: Wheaton, Gaithersburg, Germantown and East County. Contact information: 240-777-4940 or www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gilchrist.

Interfaith Works: a non-sectarian, nonprofit interfaith coalition that works to meet the needs of the poor and homeless. <http://www.iworksmc.org>

Manna Food Center: works to eliminate hunger through food distribution, food recovery, education and advocacy. <http://www.mannafood.org/>

Mental Health Association of Montgomery County (MHA): promotes mental wellness and supports those with mental illness (children, teens, families and seniors) through education, advocacy and community service programs. <http://www.mhamc.org/html/index.html>

Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL): works to expand opportunities for high-quality English language and literacy instruction through programs in capacity building and public engagement. <http://mcael.org/>

Montgomery College Adult ESOL and Basic Skills for College and Careers Unit: provides classes on basic academic skills and GED® test preparation, English language, computer literacy and U.S. citizenship for college and entry-level employment. <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/wdce/aalg>

Montgomery County Volunteer Center: connects individuals and groups to ongoing service opportunities and one-time projects in the community. <http://www.montgomeryserves.org/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness/Montgomery County (NAMI): helps through support, education, and advocacy. <http://www.namimc.org/>

World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) Crossroads Program: provides counseling, mentoring and wellness services to South Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African communities who may suffer from trauma, acculturation difficulties, or emotional disorders that make their transition to life in the US more difficult. <http://www.worde.org/>

Advocacy Resources

CASA: a nonprofit community-based organization based in Hyattsville, Maryland that works to organize, advocate for, and expand opportunities for Latino and immigrant people in the state of Maryland. Programs include: employment, language and computer training, health education, citizenship and legal services. <http://www.wearecasa.org/>

Interfaith Immigration Coalition: a national partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform. <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/>

Interfaith Action for Human Rights: a mid-Atlantic coalition of faith communities that seeks to change the culture, policy or practices that violate human dignity. <http://www.interfaithactionhr.org/>

National Resettlement Agencies

These organizations work outside of Maryland to assist refugees, asylees and Central American children fleeing violence. Their websites contain a wealth of information and resources on immigration issues, programs and advocacy.

Church World Service (CWS), <http://www.cwsglobal.org>

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/episcopal-migration-ministries>

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), <http://www.hias.org/>

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), <http://www.refugees.org>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), <http://www.usccb.org/> World Relief Corporation (WR), <http://www.worldrelief.org/>



See to it that whoever enters your house obtains something to eat, however little you may have. Such food will be a source of death to you if you withhold it. Native American Religions. A Winnebago Father's Precepts

Credits:

Thanks is due to everyone contributing to the guide and especially Patty Larson who did the research and oversaw the editing process.



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Welcome New Neighbors To Montgomery County!



A Message from the Faith Community Advisory Council