

ISC's Refugee Support Services Activity Report For the month of August 2025

1) This August, our Multi-Ethnic Refugee Support Services (RSS) Team provided Employment-Related Interpretation services at PennDOT and other job sites to 6 needy refugees of various national origins, including:

1 from Eritrea, 1 from Sudan, 1 from Democratic Republic of Congo and 3 from Burma, to enable them to gain, retain, or upgrade their employment status.

Our RSS Team also provided Citizenship Assistance and Legal Assistance to 49 needy refugees, including:

4 from Bhutan, 1 from Burkina Faso, 3 from Colombia, 1 from Democratic Republic of Congo, 1 from Guatemala, 2 from Nigeria, 3 from Sudan, 18 from Syria and 16 from Venezuela to enable them to adjust their immigration status and begin their integration into the mainstream American community. Other customized legal assistance was also provided to refugees of various national origins, including:

- 41 clients with I-485 applications, resulting in 3 clients receiving biometric and 3 receiving USCIS confirmation notices.
- 8 clients with N-400 applications and 18 citizenship applicants with their USCIS Notices of Action, involving: 8 naturalization oath ceremonies, 9 scheduled interviews, 7 biometrics appointments, and 2 certificates of citizenship.

2) This August, our Afghan Refugee Support Service (ARSS) Team provided various Case Management and Employment Mentoring services to a total of 70 Afghan refugees, including:

- 120 case management, referral, and follow-up services were provided to 70 needy Afghan refugees at various sites.
- 29 translation and interpretation services were provided to Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Afghan refugees to help them interact with mainstream service providers.
- 25 employment mentoring services were provided to Afghan refugees to facilitate their achievement of self-sufficiency, resulting in two successful job placements.
- 27 Afghan refugees were provided with educational and vocational support services matching their career goals.

3) This August, our Ukrainian Refugee Support Service (URSS) Team provided various Case Management and Employment Mentoring services to a total of 68 Ukrainian refugees, including:

- 68 case management, referral, and follow-up services were provided to needy Ukrainian refugees at various sites.

- 12 translation and interpretation services were provided to needy LEP Ukrainian refugees to help them interact with mainstream service providers.
- 22 Ukrainian refugees received employment mentoring services, resulting in 5 job placements.

And various legal immigration assistance to needy Ukrainian refugees, including:

- 2 clients assisted with filing I-765 (EAD) applications.
- 2 clients assisted in filing Fee Waiver Requests (I-912).
- 2 clients assisted with immigration-related document translation.
- 21 clients provided legal guidance on various immigration issues.
- 1 client received approval of his TPS application.
- 1 client received approval of his EAD application.

4) This August, our Afghan Legal Support Service (ALSS) Team provided various GAPS services to a total of 106 at-risk Afghan refugees, including:

- 24 Afghan families, comprising 106 members, received personalized case consultations regarding their immigration service needs.
- 45 Afghan refugees received referrals and follow-ups on USCIS-related notices.
- 27 Afghan refugees were assisted with translation and interpretation services related to immigration issues, including medical examination appointments, and asylum interviews for 5 clients at the USCIS Asylum Office in Newark, NJ.
- 24 Afghan refugees were assisted in filing for permanent residency (I-485), resulting in 4 clients receiving approval for their I-485 green cards applications.
- 1 Afghan refugee was assisted in filing for asylum (I-589), resulting in his receiving approval for asylum, and a family of 5 received asylum interview notice.
- Immigration guidance was provided to 39 Afghan refugees filing for AOS (I-485). As a result, 15 clients were assisted in completing the AR-11, and 2 clients received Refugee Travel Documents.
- 19 Afghan refugees were scheduled for appointments to file their I-485 applications. Two families, totaling 7 Afghan refugees, were assisted with their I-485 case inquiry through USCIS.
- Translated the I-485 interview notice from the USCIS office in Philadelphia for 1 Afghan refugee.
- Researched the latest immigration-related updates.

5) This August, our Ukrainian Parolee Support Service (UPSS) Team provided various GAPS services to a total of 98 at risk Ukrainian refugees, including:

- 98 case management, referral, and follow-up services were provided to needy Ukrainian refugees at various sites.
- 7 Ukrainian refugees were assisted with starting their WES applications and 8 clients were helped to follow up on previous WES applications.
- 5 translation and interpretation services were provided to needy LEP Ukrainian refugees to help them interact with mainstream service providers.
- 1 Ukrainian refugee was provided employment mentoring services, to enhance his employability.

6) This August, our Refugee Entrant Assistance (REA) Team provided various GAPS services to a total of 1 at-risk Cuban and 40 Haitian refugees, including:

- 37 case management, referral, and follow-up services were provided to needy Cuban and Haitian refugees at various sites.
- 14 interpretation services were provided to Haitian refugees during the Medicare, Green Card, and Food Stamp application processes.
- 13 Haitian refugees received employment mentoring services, resulting in 6 job placements.
- 30 Venezuelan refugees were assisted with Spanish interpretation for their I-485 applications with our legal assistance team.
- 5 Venezuelan refugees were assisted with the translation of birth certificates and marriage certificates.
- 5 Venezuelan refugees were provided with employment mentoring, but no placement has been made yet.
- 15 Immigration guidance services were provided for 5 refugees in filing for I-485, and 30 Haitian refugees were informed about their current legal status.
- 1 Cuban and 17 Haitian refugees received appropriate ESL referrals.
- 2 Venezuelan refugees were assisted with transportation to a biometrics appointment.

7) Outreach, Linkage, Networking, Coordination, and Collaboration Events

This August, our ISC Team engaged in a series of impactful activities focused on community engagement, employment support, and client orientation, including:

- a) On 08/04/25, an ISC Team attended the Open House event at the Pennsylvania Immigrant and Refugee Women's Network (PAIRWN) to strengthen our inter-agency partnership and explore potential collaborative projects.
- b) On 08/07/25, the ISC hosted Mrs. Joanne Castner to provide information on a grassroots Immigration Clinic in Lancaster designed to assist those affected by the impact of continuous policy changes to their legal statuses.
- c) On 08/12/25, the ISC Afghan Team held an Information-Sharing session with Ms. Miriam Juya to promote the importance of her research on health and mental health issues within the Afghan community.
- d) On 08/21/25, the ISC Ukrainian Team attended the Ukraine Prayer and Candlelight Vigil held by the Cumberland County Historical Center. This event included the screening and panel discussion of the film "2000 Meters to Andriivka".
- e) On 08/23/25, an ISC Team participated in the Cumberland Valley Rising's Immigration Forum, which focused on interactions with immigration enforcement and how to best support the refugee community.
- f) On 08/23/25, the ISC Ukrainian Team attended the Ukrainian Fundraising Dinner at the Immanuel Christian Missionary, helping raise money to support Ukrainian troops.
- g) On 08/24/25, the ISC's Ukrainian Team joined the Word of Life Baptist Church in celebrating Ukraine's Independence Day.

- h) On 08/26/25, the ISC Team organized a multi-cultural Farewell Luncheon to express their sincere gratitude to Reverend Bruce Humphrey for his ardent support of the ISC during his service as the Pastor of the Market Square Presbyterian Church.
- i) On 08/28/25, the ISC organized a Multi-cultural Community Orientation for Dr. Sonya Rao, the State Language Access Coordinator, to share with representatives of the various immigrant and refugee communities about the mission, programs, and services of the Pennsylvania's Language Access Management Program.

**** Dr. Roger Olson and Mrs. Becky Cotich, our Volunteer Coordinators for the Market Square and Pine Street Presbyterian Churches shared the following contributions from their wonderful group.***

Dr. Roger reported the following activities that took place with the indicated families:

- 8/1 Transported Bibi Nazari and Shogofa Paghmani to the ISC food pantry.
- 8/2 Obtained bicycle from Harrisburg Recycle Bicycle for son of Kamal Bayani.
- 8/7 Transported Rukhsana Salim and her daughter Maha to medical and dental appointments.
- 8/8 Transported Bibi Nazari and Shogofa Paghmani to the ISC food pantry.
- 8/13 Delivered truckload of furniture and household goods to Nazari family in Harrisburg. Donation was received from the charity New Digs.
- 8/29 Transported Bibi Nazari to the ISC food pantry.

**** Mrs. Christine Filipovich, our Volunteer Coordinator for the Capital Region, shared the following contributions from her wonderful group.***

This report describes activities of the Harrisburg/Mechanicsburg volunteer group and the hours each volunteer spent supporting ISC clients in August 2025. In total, 228.75 hours of volunteer support.

Jady Conroy – 4 hrs.

Aug 7,14,21,28. Drove Pashton home from ESL class.

Pat and Justin Donnelly – 3.5 hrs.

Aug 17. Moved furniture with Ben Stokes to Bibi Household.

Christine Filipovich – 40 hrs.

Aug 1-31. Coordination and communications to arrange volunteer activities and donations. Recruited and assigned drivers for ESL classes beginning in September Investigated various available ESL programs. Onboarded 1 new volunteer, worked with Saad on details of the new Volunteer Voices tool. Had preliminary discussions with three prospective volunteers.

Aug 4 and 10. Collected and packed donated household items.

Aug 11. Delivered donated items to Quadusi family.

Aug 12. Delivered donated items to Paghmani family.

Keevin Graham – 20 hrs.

Aug 1,6,7,8,13,14,15, 20,21,22,26,27,28,29. Drove Zahra Bayat to and from work.

Aug 8 and 29. Drove her to and from dentist.

Barbara Hamm – 16.5 hrs.

Multiple days. Communications with volunteer coordinator, other volunteers, staff and clients about client needs; finding and picking up donated items.

Aug 1. Assisted Nezil family to obtain baby items at church sale.

Aug 10. Delivered donations to Saeedi and Nezil families.

Aug 19. Delivered donations to Nezil family.

Aug 31. Delivered donations to Nezil, Saeedi, Arab, and Sadat families.

Marleen and Scott Karns – 9.5 hrs.

Support for Mujib Ahmadzai. (SK)

Aug 8. Contact with car dealer to address a problem. (SK)

Aug 15. Conference call regarding legal issues.

Aug 26. Phone calls to assist with legal issues.

Support for Ahmadzai family (MK)

Aug 4. Hosted social outing for women and children with American women

Aug 6 and 10. Assisted Mujib Ahmadzai family with PPL OnTrack application.

Emily Krebs – 2hrs

Aug 12. Visited Saeedi women.

Aug 28. Drove Pashton to store.

Rich Krampe – 6 hrs.

Aug 5 and 14. Drove Bibi and family members, and Hadia to dentist.

Bob Little – 12 hrs.

Aug 4. Drove Zahida M to medical appointment.

Aug 22. Drove Bibi and Shogofa to food bank and Saeedi documents to county office.

Aug 25. Drove Bibi and Shogofa to and from urgent care clinic and pharmacy.

Aug 26. Picked up and delivered prescriptions to 3 clients' homes.

Aug 19 and 26. Drove Pashton to and from ESL class.

Aug 28. Drove Aminullah Noori to medical appointment

Cheryl Martin – 3 hrs.

Aug 11,18,25. ESL instruction for Shahnaz Khetabi.

JJ Patterson – 5 hrs.

Aug 13. Picked up and delivered furniture from New Digs to Bibi Nazari.

John and Susanne Robinson – 6.5 hrs.

Support for Bayani family.

Aug 12. Assisted with government paperwork, set up and instructed in use of donated sewing machine. Delivered toys and household supplies.

Aug 21. Drove women to church offering clothing, household goods, backpacks and school supplies.

Susan Rimby – 7 hrs.

Aug 4 and 18. Driving lesson for Sanan Salim

Aug 5. Driving lesson for Rukhsana Salim.

Aug 7 and 28. Driving lessons for Amena Omed.

Aug 27. Driving lesson for Dani Velasquez.

Calvin Smith – 5 hrs.

Aug 7,14,21,28. Drove Pashton home from ESL class.

Aug 24. Drove Pashton to ESL class.

Ben Stokes – 3 hrs.

Aug 17. Picked up and delivered table and chairs to Bibi family.

Barbara Sunderlin – 58.75 hrs.

Aug 4 and 6. Drove Luba Baryshpolets to work.

Aug 13. Assisted Luba with CWS consultation

Aug 21 and 27. Drove Luba to CWS and assisted with asylum application.

Aug 3 Hosted picnic for Noori and Quayami families.

Aug 1,4,14,19,21,26. Driving lessons for Meena Sarwan.

Aug 7. Delivered kitchen items to as Ima Qudusi.

Aug 7. Assisted Noori family to apply for energy assistance and set up cell autopay.

Aug 12. Drove Mahaseba to and from doctor and dentist.

Aug 15. Drove Shogofa Paghmani to ISC

Aug 15. Drove Mahaseba for donated clothing and groceries.

Aug 19. Drove Sheba Sadat to and from medical appointments.

Aug 20 and 21. Assisted Noori family with banking issue

Aug 27. Assisted Noori family with medical issues.

Aug 26. Drove Meena to and from HACC.

Aug 28. Drove Mahaseba to and from doctor. Assisted with personal finance.

Aug 28. Drove Meena Sarwan to driver exam; assisted with computer lab appointment.

John Taylor – 2hrs.

Aug 18. Drove Mrs. Sarwan and Meena to and from medical appointment.

Michael Varano – 2 hrs.

Aug 27. Drove Mrs. Popal to Project Share.

Stuart and Jane Warren – 9 hrs.

Teaching ESL for Bayani family.

Reviewing Switchboard blogs.

Maripat Wehman – 7 hrs.

ESL instruction for Amiri women.

Vi Jean Yao –7 hrs.

Aug 5,7,12,14,19,21,26. Driving lessons for Nazar.

*** Kudos to the following Golden Hearts**

This month, 6 generous donors have dropped off 112 items, consisting of clothing, household supplies, kitchen utensils, food, and a sewing machine for the needy refugees. In addition, we received baby clothes and diapers from Mrs. Jady Conroy, which were lovingly shared with two expecting Haitian mothers. Due to storage space and manpower shortage, we had to stop accepting drop-off donations at the end of August. We are truly sorry, but as of September 2025, we can only accept donations on “as needed basis”, at the request of the refugee families themselves.

In August, generous donations were received from the following compassionate partners-in-mission: (08/01/25) \$50 from Mr./Mrs. Robert & Anne Marie Birch; (08/04/25) \$250 from Mr./Mrs. George & Brigid Grode; (08/07/25) \$100 from Dr. Robert Little, designated to a Haitian family; (08/08/25) \$1,000 from Mr./Mrs. Robert & Emily Krebs; (08/12/25) \$25 from Mr. Andrew Herring; (08/12/25) \$100 from Mrs. Allison Spooner; (08/19/25) \$1,063 from Mr./Mrs. Robert & Emily Krebs designated to Saeedi Family;

(08/19/25) \$250 from Mr. John Shorb designated to Qudusi Family; (08/21/25) \$1,000 from Gregory Gable; and (08/25/25) \$1,000 from Calvary United Methodist Church.

On behalf of the fortunate refugee beneficiaries and the ISC, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to all the above-mentioned Golden Hearts.

**** This month of August 2025, we would like to share the volunteer experience of Mrs. Susan Rimby, one of our unsung heroes.***

I listened intently that Sunday in early 2023 to the announcement during our church service. The International Service Center in Harrisburg was looking for volunteers to help with the Afghan refugees who were coming to our communities. I was immediately interested. I had previously organized a tutoring program where Shippensburg University pre-service teachers tutored ESL students at Chambersburg High School. That had been a rewarding experience, and I believed that volunteering with the ISC would be similar.

I started my ISC volunteer work by writing grants that supplied laptops and data plans to new refugee families, so that they could take ESL and Cultural Orientation classes online. Then, I took training, so that I could teach that Cultural Orientation course. While that never happened, by the summer of 2023 I was teaching English to a young Afghan wife and mother who lived in Harrisburg. Here is where I found my true calling.

One day my student told me that she was learning to drive, but that it was slow going. Her husband was employed as well as enrolled in a commercial truck driving class. He didn't have enough time to drive frequently with her. I said, "Your English is good now. I can help you with the driving." We arranged a time that next week to drive together. I went home and wondered, "What have I done?" I hadn't ever taught driving to anyone other than my own teenaged son. We spoke the same language and had lots of experiences where I'd taught him something new. Could I teach something as important as driving a car to someone whose primary language and cultural frame of reference were different than mine? I needn't have worried. My student did well, and we drove together once a week, for several months with no issues. As she prepared to take her licensing exam, she mentioned that a friend of hers also wanted to learn to drive. I agreed and now had two driving students. After both of these students had passed their driving tests, they told two more friends about me. You can see where this is going....

It's been two years since I've started teaching driving, and I've had fifteen students. Most of them have been Afghan women and men, but I've also taught people from the Ukraine, Rwanda, and Cuba. They all have their drivers' licenses now. I did have to pass my last two students onto another volunteer, as I had a hip replacement in April. Many thanks to V.J. Veon, who saw that Alex and Ahmad passed their driving tests in a timely manner. My former students have used their new-found skills to work, go to school, and enjoy pleasures such as taking their children to the playground. And I have

gained as much or more than they. I've made new friends, learned about cultures I didn't understand well, and sampled fantastic food.

I can't imagine getting on a plane with one suitcase and starting life anew in another part of the world. Yet our ISC clients do so with courage, grace, and humor. I feel so proud of these new Americans in our midst. And next week, with my new hip, I start teaching driving to Student Number 16.

**** This month of August 2025, we would like to share the beneficial impact of our assistance effort on some of our refugee families.***

1) A Syrian Refugee Family

Mr. Mahmoud and Mrs. Jawaher, a Syrian couple, and their six children fled Syria in 2014 amid escalating conflict. Their journey to safety led them to Lebanon first, where life remained fraught with challenges. In southern Lebanon, local armed groups imposed strict curfews on Syrian refugees, and Mr. Mahmoud was repeatedly arrested on false charges. The family endured threats, beatings, and humiliation, forcing them to relocate more than nine times in search of safety. Even after moving to northern Lebanon, similar dangers persisted, making daily life uncertain and stressful.

Mrs. Jawaher shared her experience: *"At that time, I was living in southern Lebanon like any other Syrian refugee. Hezbollah treated us in the worst ways. They forbade all Syrian refugees from leaving their homes after six in the evening, and if they saw any Syrian outside, they would be harshly beaten and humiliated. This forced us to move many times, and even in northern Lebanon, we continued to face threats."*

During this period, Mr. Mahmoud worked in construction but after arriving in northern Lebanon, Mrs. Jawaher and her husband both worked in agriculture, while Mrs. Jawaher cared for their six children under extremely difficult circumstances. On many days, the children accompanied her to work. Mrs. Jawaher recalled poignantly: *"These are pictures of us working, taken when we were in the refugee camps in northern Lebanon, as my kids were working with me too. They have some pictures of them carrying a bucket. That day in my life I can never forget. I came back from work and saw this scene, and I cried a lot when I saw my children in that condition."*



One day a United Nations employee noticed the children were unattended and referred the family to the Children's Rights Organization, which coordinated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Over several years, the family participated in multiple interviews and submitted extensive documentation, including meetings with the American delegation, to qualify for resettlement in the United States.

Finally, on February 19, 2024, the family arrived safely in the United States. Shortly afterward, Mrs. Jawaher gave birth to their youngest daughter, which she described as a "miracle for me and my family." Upon arrival, their resettlement agency, Church World Service (CWS) in Harrisburg helped them secure housing, navigate legal documentation, and access essential resources to begin their new life. CWS provided crucial support, arranging adequate housing, assisting with paperwork, and helping the family adjust to their new environment.

When CWS concluded its core resettlement services to the family, they still faced several challenges. They had also heard from others that applying for a green card would cost around \$1,000 in fees. Fortunately, one of their friends referred them to the International Services Center (ISC), which assured them that these services could be provided free of charge to refugees. Upon their arrival at the ISC, after ensuring with CWS that there is no potential duplication of services, the RSS staff conducted a thorough assessment of needs and determined that, to safeguard the family from any future risk of deportation, it was essential to legalize their immigration status. The RSS Team immediately helped them in applying for their green cards (Permanent Resident Cards), offering step-by-step guidance throughout the application process and ensuring long-term stability and protection for the parents and their six children.

Beyond legal guidance, the RSS Team provided comprehensive assistance to help the family adapt to life in a new country. In early August, when extreme heat affected their household, RSS Team helped secure sufficient air conditioner units to ensure comfort and safety for the young children. They also supported food stamp renewals, and access to free diapers. In addition, Mrs. Rakia from the RSS team connected the family with a dedicated volunteer who assisted them in enrolling in ESL classes and provided transportation support, helping them take important steps toward self-sufficiency and integration.

ISC staff, including Mr. Dominic and Mrs. Rakia, conducted regular follow-ups, ensuring the family's needs were met, offering guidance, and helping them navigate challenges with confidence. Mrs. Jawaher shared: *"If I ever need help or advice in the future, I will contact ISC because I am fully confident, they will help without hesitation."*

Today, Mr. Mahmoud is employed at Foot Locker company, and the family enjoys stability, independence, and a hopeful future. Mrs. Jawaher reflects, *"My life now and my family's life is incomparable to our previous life... There was a difference between the past and the present as far as the sky is from the earth."* The personalized support from the ISC enabled the family to rebuild their lives, overcome adversity, and embrace a safe, thriving life in the United States.

2) An Afghan Refugee Family

When Mrs. Bibi stepped off the plane in December 2024, she carried with her nothing but hope for a safer life, a brighter future for her children, and the dream of one day standing on her own feet in this new country. She arrived with her husband, three school-age children, and one adult son, while three of her children were still overseas. Everything was unfamiliar: the language, the culture, even the simplest daily routines, but she was determined to make this place her family's new home. Mrs. Bibi had never been to school, but her work ethic and determination were unmatched. She had spent ten long years working in restaurants in Turkey to support her family, holding onto the dream that her children would one day have the opportunities she never had. But just as she was beginning to settle into her new life, tragedy struck. The agency that was helping her resettle, Jewish Family Services of Harrisburg (JFS), suddenly closed its doors in March 2025, leaving Mrs. Bibi and her family completely on their own. Overnight, they lost their only source of guidance and support. Without English knowledge, without income, and without knowing how to navigate the complicated systems around her, Mrs. Bibi quickly fell behind on rent and utilities. Within months, she owed three months of rent payments, and the fear of losing their home became unbearable.

That is when the International Service Center (ISC) became the light in her darkness. From the very first meeting, ISC Afghan Team saw more than just a struggling family — they saw Mrs. Bibi's strength, her potential, and her deep love for her children. They began by sitting with her, listening to her story, and conducting a careful assessment of her family's most urgent needs. Housing, food, healthcare, transportation, employment, everything was considered. The priority was to keep the family safe in their home. ISC Afghan Team reached out to community volunteers who stepped up in an extraordinary way, coming together to pay three months of overdue rent and utility bills. This generous act not only saved Mrs. Bibi family from homelessness but also gave them something priceless: hope. With the immediate crisis behind them, ISC Afghan Team walked with Mrs. Bibi step by step toward independence. They helped her husband and son find jobs with local companies and even coordinated volunteer drivers until the family could manage transportation on their own. When they discovered Mrs. Bibi's love and talent for cooking, they encouraged her to start selling homemade meals. ISC promoted her business in community groups, and soon, Mrs. Bibi had her very first paid orders, the first step toward building the business she had always dreamed of.

The Afghan Team helped Mrs. Bibi enroll in ESL classes at Trinity Lutheran Church and the VELT program, where she learned to write her name, address, phone number, and even her newly created email address, milestones that filled her with pride and confidence. ISC Afghan Team took turns to personally transport her to medical appointments, TB evaluations, and dental visits, helped her update her family's primary care providers, and explained every letter she received about benefits and medications.

Food pantries distributions were facilitated, donations were delivered straight to her home, and resources like New Digs provided her family with clothes and household essentials. ISC Afghan Team worked side by side with Mrs. Bibi to build her resume, register her with MJ Morgan staffing, fill out job applications, including one for TJ Maxx, and prepare her for interviews. Every step was carefully explained so that she could learn to navigate the process herself and gain the confidence to take the next step on her own. Through regular follow-ups, emotional encouragement, and patient cultural orientation, ISC Afghan Team celebrated every victory with Mrs. Bibi, no matter how small. From her first English lesson to her first food order, every milestone reminded her that she was capable, strong, and not alone. Today, the transformation is nothing short of inspiring. Mrs. Bibi, who once sat in fear and uncertainty, now smiles with confidence and pride. Her husband and son are working steadily, her children are thriving in school, and she is actively building her small cooking business while continuing to learn English.

Mrs. Bibi's story is more than just one family's journey — it is a powerful reminder of what happens when compassion meets action. With effective case management, a clear plan for the future, and a caring community by her side, what once seemed impossible became possible. Her dream now is to grow her food business and become a successful entrepreneur — and given her determination, her resilience, and the ongoing support of ISC and the community, there is no doubt she is well on her way to achieving that dream.

3) A Ukrainian Parolee Family

In November 2024, Mr. Roman arrived in the United States from Ukraine together with his wife and two children, seeking refuge from war, and hoping to build a new life filled with opportunities. At first, there was excitement about a fresh start, but that feeling soon faded as the family began facing challenges with obtaining work authorization, childcare, and employment, as well as trying to navigate an unfamiliar country and its complex systems. Realizing how difficult it would be to manage everything alone, a friend introduced Mr. Roman to the International Service Center (ISC). Through the ISC, Mr. Roman's family was connected to food bank resources, and he received guidance on opening a bank account, obtaining car insurance, applying for childcare, and enrolling in the ESL program at TEC Centro. ISC Ukrainian Team also helped him learn about many services available in the community.

Due to recent Presidential executive orders, USCIS delayed processing his Employment Authorization Document (EAD), so Mr. Roman turned again to ISC for help. The ISC Ukrainian Case Manager, who is an USCIS Accredited Representative, submitted a request to USCIS to expedite the case. Thanks to this official intervention, Mr. Roman received his EAD within just three weeks. The ISC Ukrainian Team also assisted him with diploma translation and accreditation through the World Educational Services (WES). Recognizing his previous experience, ISC registered him for crane operator training offered by the IU13 Community Education Program to help him re-enter his former professional field.

Back in Ukraine, Mr. Roman managed his own business and held a certificate as a crane operator in metallurgical production. Over the years, he also developed a wide range of practical skills in carpentry, construction, painting, roofing, and furniture restoration. Researching the job market, Mr. Roman began advertising his handyman services online. ISC Ukrainian Team encouraged him to promote his skills more broadly, offered to help him create his own website, and even assisted him with designing a business card. This allowed him to take on small projects such as repairing cabinets, tiling bathrooms, painting patios, installing TV sets, fixing roofs and fences, and restoring furniture. Although this work provided some income, it was not sufficient to fully support his family. Mr. Roman also wanted to apply for asylum to legalize his immigration status. ISC referred him to the Immigration Office of Craig Shagin and provided translation support for many of his legal and civic documents.

Now, with the promotional efforts of the entire Ukrainian Team, Mr. Roman is on the path to building a sustainable business as a handyman, with the ability to work legally and provide for his family. His confidence grew and he even expressed his future goals: *"I dream of expanding my handyman business and one day I want to hire others from our community to work with me."*

With the guidance and strong support of the ISC Ukrainian Team at every step, Mr. Roman turned challenges into opportunities. America attracts many people with its opportunities, but starting a new life here can be discouraging if things do not work out as expected. That is why support, such as what Mr. Roman received, makes such a difference. It was a great relief for Mr. Roman to have a team of compatriots that not only understands the challenges of resettlement but also shares the same language, culture, and refugee experiences.

4. A Guatemalan refugee family

In October 2024, Mrs. Sofia C., 34 years old, made a choice no mother should ever have to face: To flee her Guatemalan home not in search of opportunity, but to escape death. Mrs. Sofia had built a thriving food stand in her hometown of Jutiapa. Her dream was modest but meaningful: To support her family through hard work and honest business. But in a place ruled by fear, success became a target. Gangs arrived with threats, extortion, and abuse. The violence was swift, loud, and merciless. Her husband, Mr. Mynor, had just been diagnosed with kidney disease. Their daughters Melisa (16) and Mariana (11) were growing up in the shadow of terror. If they stayed, they might not survive. So, they left.

When they arrived in the United States as refugees, Jewish Family Services (JFS) of Harrisburg was responsible for providing basic reception and placement services to them. But within months, that support vanished. The closing of JFS refugee program following President Trump's order to suspend the national refugee resettlement program, left Sofia and her family in limbo. They were helpless in a foreign country, with no job, no English skills, no transportation, and a husband in urgent need of medical care.

Then came a second chance. Mrs. Sofia was referred to the International Service Center (ISC), where she met Mr. Andres, the ISC Spanish-speaking Program Assistant. A comprehensive service plan was appropriately completed, because this was not just another case file; it was an emergency. Mrs. Sofia needed housing, employment income, language interpretation from Spanish to English. And, most critically, medical care to save her husband's life. Through persistent networking efforts, Mr. Andres was able to convince JFS leaders to provide emergency rental assistance to Mrs. Sofia to prevent the family from becoming homeless. During the brutally hot summer days, Mr. Andres was able to secure a donated air conditioning unit that he installed in their apartment himself. But the most critical step followed, when Mr. Andres was able to assist the family in applying for Medical Insurance and appropriate care for Mr. Mynor. Job applications were sent out to local employers for Mrs. Sofia to become Mr. Mynor full-time caregiver.

By August 2025, everything began to change. Mrs. Sofia now works full-time for Paradise Care, LLC., as a Care Giver for Mr. Mynor, who is being treated regularly by UPMC kidney specialists. Their daughters are back in school, slowly reclaiming a childhood once stolen by fear. And next week, Mrs. Sofia will begin the application process for permanent residency, a major milestone in her family's road to stability. But she is not stopping there. On September 10, 2025, Sofia will begin English classes at the ELL program at Trinity Lutheran Church. After months of navigating life in silence, she is finally preparing to find her voice.

Finally, we would like to end this monthly report by sharing with you the following update:

On May 20, 2025, the Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem announced that: *"We've reviewed the conditions in Afghanistan with our interagency partners, and they do not meet the requirements for a TPS (Temporary Protected Status) designation. Afghanistan has had an improved security situation, and its stabilizing economy no longer prevent Afghan parolees from returning to their home country. Additionally, the termination furthers the national interest as Department of Homeland Security (DHS) records indicate that there are recipients who have been under investigation for fraud and threatening our public safety and national security. Reviewing TPS designations is a key part of restoring integrity in our immigration system."* The TPS designation for Afghanistan therefore expired on May 20, 2025, and the termination was effective on July 14, 2025.

As a direct consequence of this government decision, the PA Refugee Resettlement Program (PA-RRP) has notified us that as of contract year 2025-2026 starting on October 1, 2025, our Afghan Refugee Support Services (ARSS) Program will be terminated. We have been trying and continued to try our best to help all the Afghan refugees who came recently under the Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) legalize their immigration status, before our ARSS Program phases out.

Also, after reviewing country conditions and consulting with the appropriate U.S.

government agencies, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem determined that Haiti no longer met the conditions for its designation for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Haiti's TPS designation and related benefits were slated to terminate on Sept. 2, 2025. However, on July 15, 2025, a single judge in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York issued a final judgement in *Haitian Evangelical Clergy Association v. Trump* (No. 25-cv-1464), that makes the effective date of any termination no earlier than Feb. 3, 2026. The Department of Homeland Security vehemently disagrees with this ruling and is working to determine the next steps.

And just recently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that the Secretary of Homeland Security is terminating the 2021 designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The 2021 designation of Venezuela was set to expire on September 10, 2025. However, after reviewing country conditions and consulting with appropriate U.S. Government agencies, the Secretary determined that Venezuela no longer continues to meet the conditions for the 2021 designation for Temporary Protected Status. The Secretary, therefore, is terminating the 2021 Temporary Protected Status designation of Venezuela as required by law. This termination is effective November 7, 2025. After November 7, 2025, nationals of Venezuela who have been granted Temporary Protected Status under Venezuela's 2021 designation will no longer have Temporary Protected Status.

Only Ukrainian asylees seem to be more fortunate. As required by the statute, at least 60 days before the expiration of a current Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation or extension, the Secretary of Homeland Security, after consultation with appropriate government agencies, must review the conditions in the foreign state to determine whether conditions for the TPS designation continue to be met. After this required review, the Department of Homeland Security extended TPS for Ukraine for 18 months, from April 20, 2025, through Oct. 19, 2026. Individuals with a pending or approved TPS application may qualify for certain public benefits and REAL ID driver's licenses and identification cards.

The road in front of us is full of challenges and uncertainties but we have to maintain our refugee assistance mission by continuing to rely on faith, hope, and love, as we have always done for the past many years. As a nation of immigrants, we should continue to welcome all underprivileged and persecuted refugees who landed on our shores. We have to convince our government leaders that history has demonstrated over and over again, that America has very often been good to refugees, and refugees have always been good to America.

Please do not forget us in your prayers.

Respectfully submitted,

Phuong N. Truong, Executive Director, ISC