

## Excerpts from “Sponsoring a Refugee Family” Pamphlet from Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, Date Unknown

### Sponsoring a Refugee Family

#### What Is Sponsorship?

Sponsorship is a MORAL COMMITMENT, NOT A LEGAL OR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT. Sponsors provide the support and friendship necessary to ease the transition between cultures. Sponsors are not responsible for any legal or financial obligations. Most of the major responsibilities, such as food, housing, orientation and paperwork occur in the first three months, though ties of friendship may last for years.

- Getting a driver's license
- Learning bus routes
- Understanding utility and other bills
- Transporting refugees to medical appointments
- Teaching English

#### What Are The Sponsor's Responsibilities?

Pre-arrival orientation.

- Meet with Bureau staff to prepare for the family's arrival.
- Food, housing, clothing.
- Arrange for suitable housing. Donations or used merchandise stores can be helpful in finding household goods and clothing. Basic food items help the families get through the first days.

Airport arrival.

- Meet the family at the airport and help them get settled in their new home. A bilingual case manager from the Bureau will accompany you.
- Medical and dental check-ups. Make appointments for check-ups as soon as possible after the family arrives.

Post-arrival orientation.

- Meet with Bureau staff and your refugee family to go over plans for a successful resettlement.

#### How Does The Bureau of Refugee Services Assist Its Sponsors?

- The Bureau is a subdivision of the Iowa Department of Human Services and is the state agency responsible for resettling and serving refugees in Iowa.
- The Bureau receives funds from the U.S. State Department to assist in refugee resettlement.
  - Out of those funds, sponsors will receive \$250 per refugee to cover expenses such as utility and rent deposits: rent, food, and household goods. For example, \$1,000 would be available to assist sponsors with expenses for a four-person family.
- All resettlement funds distributed to the sponsor must go to benefit the refugee. Sponsors are responsible for documenting all expenditures.
- In addition to the financial assistance, the Bureau will also assign a bilingual case manager to each refugee family. They will be available to work with the sponsor and the family on a continuing basis.
- The Bureau is responsible for placing the refugee into employment, obtaining social security numbers, applying for medical coverage and food stamps and school enrollment.
- The Bureau will also act as a liaison between families and other community and governmental agencies.

**Is Sponsorship Rewarding?**

YES!!! Just ask Carol and Sid Dykstra who have sponsored 19 refugees. This is what they had to say about sponsorship. "As community volunteers, we have found sponsorship to be our most rewarding volunteer experience. It is so exciting to work directly with families who have so little as they begin their new lives in a land of freedom and many opportunities".