

Refugee Women of Denver

Spring 2018

Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains

Our first issue!

Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains: Refugee & Asylee Programs is proud to present the first issue of the Refugee Women of Denver newsletter. In this newsletter, we hope to celebrate the lives and stories of refugee women from our communities. We will also share resources, information, and events that may be relevant to our readers.

New English classes in Denver!

There are new opportunities to learn English in the Denver area. Some classes are in areas like Aurora, Thornton, and Green Valley Ranch, and some offer childcare! (more on page 3)

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A free phone call to family abroad!

Lutheran Family Services has partnered with the Red Cross to provide free international phone calls for clients of LFS who need to contact their family. (more on page 2)

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**LUTHERAN
FAMILY SERVICES**
Rocky Mountains



All photos except (top row/left, third row/second from right, bottom row/second from right) by David Thatcher (2013)

“Sometimes easy, sometimes difficult”:

Learning English in a new country

Ten months ago, Selam walked off of an airplane at the Denver International Airport. She had almost no formal education in the English language from her home country of Eritrea – “ABCD only” – and was entering a world where English is everywhere.

Today, Selam is attending English class at Focus Points, a new location for English classes in Aurora. She started with simple English, like “Hello, my name is Selam. I am a student.”

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Women at Work: *Bakhcha*



This is Bakhcha, who works as a Refugee AmeriCorps member and intern at LFS. Bakhcha currently works with the volunteering and legal services departments. Originally from Kurdistan, Bakhcha came to the US about 3.5 years ago. She said a friend recommended LFS to her when she was looking for jobs. She said she wanted to work at LFS "because I like working with humanitarian organizations. I like to help people."

Restoring Family Links:

You can call your family in other countries from the LFS office.

LFS is now partners with the Red Cross Restoring Family Links program. Through this program, LFS clients can call their loved ones in other countries for free.

Who can participate?

You must be a client of LFS to participate.

Who can I call?

You can call family members and loved ones in any country.

How long can I talk?

You can talk for 10-15 minutes.

How much does it cost?

Nothing! All phone calls are free.

How many times can I call my family?

You can use the phone one time per day, one day per week.

How do I make an appointment?

Please call the main LFS telephone number at 303-980-5400 and say that you want to use the Red Cross phone program.



Photo "Restoring Family Links" by ICRC, used under CC-BY SA / Cropped

"Sometimes easy, sometimes difficult": (continued from page 1)

Now Selam is excited to learn more English words and sentences that she can use every day. She also likes the classes because there is a room for early childhood education, where a teacher educates Selam's young son while she is in class.

Another student in the class is Hawa, a refugee from Sudan who has been in the US for four years. More than anything, Hawa hopes to learn to read and write. Reading and writing, said Hawa, is the key to getting a good job in the future. "If you can read and write," said Hawa, "you can work any job... I like a good job for my future. I get money, I feed my children, I pay my bills."

The classroom where Selam and Hawa study is large, but there are few students in the class today. Anna Meenan, the English teacher, said that the small class size helps her to give each student the help that they need. "Individual attention is key," said Anna, "I have been able to be more flexible to each student's needs." The program also plans to open more classes for students who speak higher levels of English.

The Focus Points classes are part of the Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP)'s plan to offer more options for learning English to refugees in Colorado. Nick Lesley, the CRSP Employment and Training Coordinator, said that CRSP understands that it is difficult to attend English classes if the only classes are downtown. "We were tired of expecting [someone] to work 8+ hours a day, then riding a bus 1.5 hour both ways to attend a 1.5 hour class." So, CRSP is "bringing classes to neighborhoods where refugees live" and is opening many new classes in the Denver area (see page 3 for information about more English class locations).

Hawa agreed that having classes in her neighborhood is helpful. She said that she went downtown to English classes before, but the school was far and it was difficult to park. The new classes "are good," she said, "It is close to my home and it has parking."

Learning English can be a challenge, both women said. Selam said that her classes are "sometimes easy, sometimes difficult." And Hawa said that "when you come the first time, it's very hard. You have to work hard, learn hard." But, added Hawa, things get easier: "The first month, year is very hard. But two years, four years, it's ok, you will learn a lot of things. You need to be patient... This is what I learned."

Sharing our stories:

Aziza and Leocadie

Students in LFS school programs asked the question "Who am I?" this month. Here are some answers:

Aziza Makambo, age 9, is a poet!
Here is one of her poems:

I Am
 I am a teacher.
 I wonder how many moons
 there are.
 I hear cars screeching.
 I see some people.
 I want a puppy.
 I am a good friend.

 I pretend to be super girl.
 I feel happy because
 Mpenda is silly.
 I touch slime.
 I worry about my baby.
 I cry when I feel sad.
 I am a police.

 I understand my teacher's
 rules.
 I say good things.
 I dream about playing with
 my friend.
 I try my best.
 I hope I can have chips.
 I am a good person.

Leocadie, age 14, is an artist!
Here is some of her artwork:



Looking for an English class?

Here are some options:

Emily Griffith Technical College*

1860 Lincoln Street, Denver, CO 80203
720-423-4750

5 days/week, many class times
Volunteer tutors also available for in-home lessons once per week

Focus Points*

10700 E Evans Ave, Aurora, CO 80014
303-292-0770

2 days/week, mornings
Childcare available on site

Project Worthmore*

1532 Galena St, Aurora, CO 80010
720-460-1393

5 days/week, many class times
Childcare available on site
Classes also at Hope Communities

Jefferson County Schools*

Multiple locations – Lakewood, Wheat Ridge, Arvada
303-982-7484
3+ days/week, mornings and evenings

Spring Institute*

1255 Yosemite St, Denver, CO 80220
303-863-0188

3 days/week, mornings
Teacher's assistant/paraprofessional
English classes also at Crawford Elementary School

Denver Public Libraries Plaza*

Multiple locations – Denver, Green Valley Ranch, Montbello
720-865-2362

1-2 days per week, days vary by location
Open for families, children welcome

Adams 14

Multiple locations – Thornton, Denver, Northglenn, Westminster, Commerce City
303-853-5571

2+ days/week, many class times

*free classes

For more information about English classes, you can contact your resettlement agency (ACC, IRC, LFS)

Help other refugee women!

Do you want to help other refugee women in Denver? You can:

- ❖ **Contribute to the newsletter!** Do you have words, art, or resources that you want to share? Do you have thoughts or questions about the newsletter? Do you want more information about any subject?
- ❖ **Talk to us about your ideas!** LFS is looking for refugee women to help us decide what new programs and services we should explore. Meet with LFS staff to tell us what you think—no English needed!

We want to hear from you! Please contact us at:

Phone: 720-541-6571

Email: refugeewomenofdenver@gmail.com

You do not need to speak English—just be ready to tell us what language you speak!

Do you need anything from your resettlement agency?

Contact your agency (ACC, IRC, LFS) if you need any help with:

- Public benefits (TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, OAP, SSI)
- Finding a job, classes, or training programs
- Bringing family to the United States
- Any other questions!

May 13th is Mother's Day!

Mother's Day is celebrated every year in the US on the second Sunday of May. It is a day to celebrate and appreciate the mothers, grandmothers, and other mother figures in our lives. Happy Mother's Day!

Next issue: Food and Nutrition Call for recipes!

We will focus on food and nutrition in our next issue, and we want to hear what you think!

- What is your favorite food? Do you want to share the recipe or a photo?
- What does food mean for you, your family, or your culture? Are there any foods that are important to you?
- What do you think about nutrition here in the United States? Is it easy to find healthy foods for you or your family?
- Are you interested in learning more about nutrition and healthy eating?

Please send your favorite recipe, a photo of your favorite food, or your thoughts about food and nutrition to refugeewomenofdenver@gmail.com.

“And so I think that it's vital to have women's voices at the table. Because when we are at the table we're able to produce amazing things.”

– Ilhan Omar speaking about women in government in an interview with College Magazine.

Article by Mariya Khan, August 1, 2017, <https://www.collegemagazine.com/powerful-women-leaders-ilhan-omar/>

Refugee Women in the News: Representative Ilhan Omar

In 2016, Ilhan Omar was elected as a member of the House of Representatives in the state of Minnesota. Ilhan was born in Somalia but had to leave the country when she was a child because of the civil war. Ilhan's family stayed in a refugee camp in Kenya for four years before coming to the US.



Ilhan is now very successful. When she won the election in 2016, she became the “first Somali-American Muslim legislator elected to a state legislature in the United States.” She is also the mother of three children and cares very much about education; she is a member of the Higher Education & Career Readiness Policy House Committee. Ilhan is also involved with an organization called Women Organizing Women, which “empowers East African women to take civic leadership roles in their community.”

Images and information regarding Ilhan Omar is from Ilhan Omar's website at www.ilhanomar.com. Image originally by Jim Mone/AP; cropped.

Lutheran Family Services— Who are we?

LFS was founded in 1948. Originally, the organization was only an adoption agency, but now the organization provides adoption services as well as foster care services, services for the elderly, disaster aid, legal immigration services, and refugee services. LFS started providing refugee services in 1975. The organization has offices in Denver, Colorado Springs, Greeley/Fort Morgan, and Albuquerque.

The LFS website says, “We believe that all people, from the newborn infant to the most elderly person, deserve to be valued in our community. Therefore, Lutheran Family Services is committed to offering love and support to the people it serves, regardless of race, religion, gender, or age, to help equip them to live full and whole lives.”

For more information, go to www.lfsrm.org.