

COMMUNITY WORK DAY

CARING MINISTRIES INC.

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR

Assisting Syrian Refugees

When we are given the opportunity to help our neighbors, let us "not seek our own good, but the good of others."¹ Corinthians 10:24 As catastrophes happen around the world, we earnestly begin to lean more on the hope of Jesus Christ. As we lean on the true hope, others lean to us who have resources and love to share it with them. The Lord works in mysterious ways and it might

require us working together with others and not acquiring self-profit. Let us trust in the Lord, as we serve others.

On Saturday we went out to the apartments where recent refugees are living with the intent to help in any way possible. Primarily, on this first visit, to meet them and help clean the apartments and area around the apartments and to find out what needs they may have. I was really excited to be able to participate as it is something I have been praying about for a while. I was able to use a vacuum provided by the International Institute to help vacuum apartments that currently did not own a vacuum. New connections were made with several Somali families as

well as Syrian families. I was able to communicate to some degree with the Syrian families with my Moroccan Arabic. They were able to express some of the needs they have, mostly in preparation for the cold weather. They also would like to have English classes in the apartments on the weekends since other jobs or lack of transportation prevented them from going to the International

Institute's classes. All of the families were very welcoming and kind. The children were curious about us and we exchanged smiles if not conversation.

I am excited and determined to continue to build relationships that we have started. We need to encourage each other to reach out on a regular basis and put forth our combined efforts to make a real difference in the lives of our newest Americans.- Lisa Payne

On Sunday we were able to come back with a few Turkey's from Concordia in Kirkwood to give to families we had met the day before. I was also able to give some socks to some of the children for the recently cold weather. Several cups of sweet tea later we were on our way to more communication and forming relationships. I am determined to learn more Syrian Arabic and have found an App that has some basic phrases. I encourage anyone who is

MEGAN PANARUSKY

I don't make it to North City much, or really cross paths with people from other cultures much, as much as I say I care about that. But I do hear about all the Syrians who need a new home, and I want to do something. I can't imagine moving to a new country because you have to and building a new life from fragments. The least we can do is welcome them into a place that is clean. That feels like people care about it and take pride in it. I mostly went around picking up trash, but I hope that effort contributed to a larger message that "you're important, and we don't think you should be thrown away."

interested to at least learn some greetings. An expression of warmth comes over the face of a stranger when you attempt to greet them in their own language.

HELPING HANDS

Building Relationships

Our primary objective is to find ways to work together and share ideas on the issue of helping refugees in St. Louis. We know they have experienced things before they arrived here that we cannot begin to imagine. Beginning life in a new country can be stressful on anyone and especially those who were already vulnerable. We want to share our love and support here in this country. While supporting them in what ways we are able, we also want to be able to reach this group with the message of Christ's love and mercy.

The visits that we made the weekend before Thanksgiving were the beginning. We have started to establish new relationships. This is the first step for Christians to engage with Muslims in dialogue. We need to remove the fear that prevents us from knowing each other. Muslims often have many misconceptions about Christianity and Christians. We need to put forth our best effort to show them who Christians really are and where our heart is. Through engaging with the refugees we may also find that we have a few misconceptions about who they

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are and what they believe. Removing these walls is necessary to build trust.

It is possible for the refugees to trust Christians. In order for them to trust Christians they need to see how Christians behave, how we help people in need, even when those we are helping are of a different religion. Some ways we can reach out are through sharing our food (check to make sure your ingredients do not violate their religious laws) and our culture. Showing interest and learning about their culture will also make them feel welcome. We can see what their needs are and try to help them find ways to meet them. Sometimes they may not yet know where to find certain items. We can also help them get connected to donated items. We can invite families on outings such as going to the zoo or art museum, or even just going to the park. We can get to know them so that the country they have found refuge in feels less like a strange land. Even if language can be a barrier, a lot can be communicated through actions and facial expressions as well as a translation app on the phone.

make a real difference in the lives of our newest Americans.

- Lisa Payne

In our next steps, our hope is to try to organize an English class on the weekends within the area where this population of refugees are living. Many have difficulties going to the International Institute or other locations for formal classes. If we focus on building their English conversation skill, then increased understanding can happen. We would also be open to other possibilities to engage the children and adults in activities that will help build skills and foster community.

Our ultimate goal is to build trust and positive relationships. Through these relationships we can also have open conversations about Jesus. We know more than they do about Christ, but it may be helpful to start with what they do know about Christ by asking them and learning what the Qur'an says about Jesus. Talking about religious views can be a sensitive topic and can make the Muslim feel like you are merely trying to convert him from his religion—a dangerous possibility from the Muslim's point of view, one that is punishable by death in some interpretations or at least social ostracization. Recognizing and

respecting this weight your new Muslim friend may be feeling, balance your persistence with sensitivity. Seeds may be planted that we do not see bare fruit

even if they eventually do. We can only try our best to act out the love and message of Christ and pray that the Holy Spirit will help to grow any seeds planted.

Prayer is our most powerful tool. –
Noureddine Ha

By the motivation of Jesus Christ's love, we stabilize communities by empowering moderate workforce Americans, immigrants, and refugees in achieving self-sufficiency and sustainable housing.

Caring Ministries Inc.
6704 Fyler Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63139





