

Kentucky Refugee Ministries: Available Volunteer Positions

For information about any of these positions, please contact:

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Apartment Set-up

Volunteers are needed to set up apartments before new refugee families arrive in Louisville. This set-up includes assembling bed frames, making beds, putting away kitchenware and food, and creating an atmosphere that feels like home.

Supervisor: Shelley Dewig, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Requirements: Available during weekday afternoons, mornings and some evenings. Have reliable transportation. Able to perform minor physical labor (example: assemble metal bed frames). Team worker.

Volunteer Impact: This position offers the right individual an opportunity to play an important role in the resettlement of refugees and immigrants. The volunteer who sets up an apartment can make a difference in how welcome an arrival feels in their new home. The apartment is the first thing refugees and immigrants see in this country, and the volunteer can participate in making a good first impression.

Grocery Shopper

Volunteers are needed to shop for groceries the day before a refugee family's arrival. The volunteer uses a supermarket gift card and a shopping list to purchase food for the family and then drops off the purchases at the family's apartment during the apartment set-up. This job is done many times in cooperation with apartment set-up volunteers, so that the team of volunteers stocks the family's refrigerator and pantry as part of the set-up. Other times, however, the grocery shopper him/herself will put away the groceries that he/she bought for the clients.

Supervisor: Shelley Dewig, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Requirements: Flexible schedule and open to last-minute calls. Have reliable transportation.

Volunteer Impact: Volunteers who help grocery shop many times are involved in helping set up apartments as well. The grocery shopper also makes a difference in a refugee or immigrant's first impression of America. Having a fully stocked apartment relieves much of the initial stress of coming to a strange land with nothing and lets the new clients focus on other matters that arise when they first arrive.

Youth Mentors

The Youth Services Coordinator has begun a mentoring program called New Beginnings that would provide KRM clients' children extra interaction with each other and volunteers and would consist of field trips outside of the school environment. One group meeting a month would be designated where volunteer mentors and their students would attend field trips to local Louisville establishments such as the library, the Louisville Science Center, the

park, the river, the IMAX theater, etc. The mentor and his/her student would also be able to participate in activities together outside of the group activities as long as the parents have given permission.

Supervisor: Lisa Nguyen, Youth Services Coordinator

Requirements: Must be at least 18 years old, pass JCPS background check, commitment of one school year and at least 4-6 hours a month. Willing to participate in individual activities outside of group meetings if parents allow.

Volunteer Impact: Middle and high school aged youth usually have a more difficult time adjusting than their younger counterparts. Mentors provide stability, reassurance and a good role model for this age group which is very important during the first few months in America.

Caseworker Assistant/Refugee Aide/General Office Help

Volunteers with daytime availability are needed to help caseworkers by taking refugees to the Kentucky ID office, to register for WIC benefits, to sign up for bank accounts, to learn more about the TARC bus system, and more. We also need volunteers to sometimes fill in for our receptionist and perform general office duties such as organizing files, mailing newsletters/invites and case noting.

Supervisor: Shelley Dewig, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Requirements: Have reliable transportation and daytime availability, feel comfortable interacting with people who speak limited English.

Volunteer Impact: Many times staff members receive information about upcoming appointments only a couple of days in advance, and on-call volunteers are highly valued in terms of their flexibility and willingness to help out at a moment's notice. Non-profit organizations many times have to do things "at the last minute" and volunteers who are available at such short notice help out immensely when the staff is overwhelmed.

Bilingual (Spanish-English) Job Assistant

A dedicated and flexible volunteer is needed to help with office duties in the Cuban-Haitian office. This volunteer will do filing and organizational tasks as assigned by the caseworkers that serve Cuban clients. Some clerical work might also be involved such as making phone calls.

Supervisors: Dalay Mendez and Rodolfo Bernal, *Cuban-Haitian caseworkers*

Requirements: Proficient writing and speaking abilities in both Spanish and English organizational skills and daytime availability.

Volunteer Impact: The Cuban/Haitian caseworkers have many clients to work with and need a bilingual volunteer to help during the day. This allows the caseworkers to spend more time interacting one-on-one with clients which leads to them receiving the services they need in a timelier manner. As a result, the caseworkers become much more efficient.

Bilingual (Spanish-English) Appointment Escort

Dedicated and flexible volunteers are needed to accompany and interpret for Cuban clients on appointments with social service agencies, to apply for licenses and IDs, to shop at Goodwill with vouchers, and to open bank accounts. Transportation can be provided by a staff caseworker, the volunteer and client can use public transit, or the volunteer and client

can go in the volunteer's own automobile provided the volunteer has signed the transportation release form.

Supervisors: Rodolfo Bernal and Dalay Mendez, *Cuban-Haitian caseworkers*

Requirements: Proficient writing and speaking in both Spanish and English and daytime availability.

Volunteer Impact: The Cuban/Haitian caseworkers have many clients to work with, and many times they need a volunteer to take their clients to appointments. This provides clients with more interaction with friendly Americans and improves their English and also helps the bilingual volunteer work on their language skills, be it English or Spanish. The volunteer helps free up time for the caseworkers to catch up on necessary paperwork or to make more appointments with clients and relieves the stress of trying to provide all the transportation for every client.

English as a Second Language Tutor/Substitute Teacher

Volunteers are needed to meet with an ESL learner during class time one day a week.

Volunteers will be paired individually or in small groups with adult students to practice basic reading, writing, and job skills. Volunteers may also be called to substitute for an ESL class if the teacher is out for the day.

Supervisor: Sarah Houston, *ESL Program Manager*

Requirements: Successfully pass background check. Able to commit to one day a week. Feel comfortable interacting with people who speak limited English. Have daytime availability.

Volunteer Impact: Conversing in English in an easygoing environment is one of the best, and fastest, ways for clients to learn the language. Volunteers can build relationships while simultaneously helping clients to assimilate faster into the American culture.

Citizenship Tutor

Volunteers are needed to meet with clients who are eligible for citizenship for an hour once a week or during the citizenship class (2 hours). Volunteers will be paired individually with students of KRM's citizenship classes to study material for the citizenship exam, conduct mock citizenship interviews, and practice speaking English.

Supervisor: Erin Pace, *Program Specialist-Citizenship*

Requirements: Successfully pass background check. Able to commit to four or more tutoring sessions each month. Feel comfortable interacting with people who speak limited English and have evening availability.

Volunteer Impact: Clients who are enrolled in citizenship classes many times do not have the language skills necessary to pass their test to become a U.S. citizen. Volunteers might have to teach them how to read and write in English and also just converse with them, which helps the clients grasp the knowledge necessary for understanding the questions asked on the test. After clients understand English a little better, volunteers can help prepare them for the test more directly by asking the clients questions that would be asked in the interview. This one-on-one attention helps take the pressure off of the citizenship teacher and also gives the client a little more confidence.

Special Events Volunteer

Volunteers are needed to help plan KRM's fall/spring events, including our Global Gourmet during October, the Highlands Presbyterian book/bake sale, the Highlands neighborhood festival, World Refugee Day and Worldfest. Volunteers will assist with sending out invitations (Global Gourmet), supervising the children's area and helping children at the arts and crafts table (Highlands festival), setting up and cleaning up after events, manning the ticket booths, setting up silent auction items, man silent auction table (Global Gourmet), being involved in planning World Refugee Day in the summer, manning KRM's booth and answer questions about the organization (Worldfest), baking and selling single items such as cookies, cakes, brownies (Highlands book/bake sale), etc. Great for free weekends!

Supervisors: Shelley Dewig, *Volunteer Coordinator* and Liz Kaznak, *Assistant Director*

Requirements: Successfully pass background check. Feel comfortable interacting with people who speak limited English.

Volunteer Impact: Many of our special events committees are staffed primarily of volunteers which takes strain off of the staff to organize all of these events and also helps the volunteers gain experience with how non-profit events usually are planned. Also, it's a great way for volunteers who might not have much past experience in other areas to become involved and help out KRM.

Donations Organizer

Kentucky Refugee Ministries is in need of dedicated volunteers to come in bi-weekly or monthly for a couple of hours to help sort and organize donations that are used for refugee resettlement. Donations include clothing and household items, school supplies, uniforms, toys, etc. This job is more independent as the volunteers are able to decide how best to organize donations. This would be an on-going project, and volunteers would be responsible for organizing new donations that come in.

Supervisors: Shelley Dewig, *Volunteer Coordinator* and Lee Welsh, *Sponsorship Developer*

Requirements: Able to dedicate a couple of hours a week/every 2 weeks to this project. Organized and able to work individually.

Volunteer Impact: KRM receives many donations, and dedicated individuals who do not mind working alone for a couple of hours every so often are such a huge asset. KRM depends on these volunteers to keep the basement organized so that caseworkers and the youth services coordinator can access donations easily and give them to the clients who need them. This results in KRM staff giving away the donations more efficiently to more clients.

Family Life Center Volunteer

KRM is always looking for dedicated individuals who enjoy working with our refugee toddlers at the Family Life Center located at Highland Baptist Church on the corner of Cherokee and Grinstead. The Center is dedicated to providing English classes for mothers who will not be working in the near future due to the young age of their children so that they may have a chance to become better assimilated in American culture. Volunteers would be responsible for supervising the toddlers, playing with them, cleaning up and organizing snack time. The Center is open every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9am-noon.

Supervisor: Liz Kaznak, *Assistant Director*

Requirements: Successfully pass background check. Able to commit to a couple of hours every week and have daytime availability. Must enjoy working with very small children and must be patient. Prior babysitting experience is a plus.

Volunteer Impact: Volunteers who work at the Family Life Center provide additional support and care for toddlers, and also they assist in building confidence in the children who, being away from their mothers for a couple of hours, might otherwise not adjust very well. Additionally, as children can do unexpected things, volunteers help in keeping operations running smoothly by giving the assistant director room to handle other problems that arise.

Mock Refugee Camp

Kentucky Refugee Ministries is proud to offer to local schools and organizations that serve young people a new program called the mock refugee camp, designed from a game entitled *Passages* by the UNHCR. This program is aimed primarily at middle to high school aged youth, and the students participate in a simulation of refugee displacement and exile before settling into a mock refugee camp. They are first required to “cross the border” and at the mock camp, participants are required to accomplish simple tasks faced by refugees such as visiting the health clinic, receiving food and water, completing immigration paperwork and interviews, etc. Volunteers are needed to guide small groups of students through the camp, camp activities, and assist with discussion at the close of camp. Volunteers play the roles of border crossing guards, border entrance staff, UN officers, food and water distributors, health clinic workers and school teachers.

Requirements: Volunteers must be flexible and be able to commit to at least 2.5 hours on the day of the simulation as that is the minimum time the game will take. They must have daytime availability, but some reenactments will take place in the evenings. A few days before the actual event, the coordinators will speak with the youth group, and it is helpful if volunteers can stay for that presentation. Volunteers must be culturally sensitive and have an open mind as well.

Volunteer Impact: The mock refugee camp is designed to offer primarily American students who may have little to no experience with refugees or their living conditions a little insight into this world. Volunteers themselves will also learn much more about what our refugee clients experience before arriving to America. The goal of the simulation is to provide more understanding and better cultural competency for the students, and our volunteers who help us implement it see firsthand the effect on the participants. As students are more exposed to the refugee world, they become more knowledgeable about its problems. Volunteers and students alike also become better able to know how to interact with refugees and also how to help them adjust to life in America.

Elderly Program Mentors

Elderly refugees face particularly steep challenges when they are resettled in the United States. Unlike younger refugees, many elderly refugees do not go to work or school. Consequently, elderly refugees often face a high degree of isolation. Such isolation can lead to problems such as depression. Furthermore, elderly refugees depend on public benefits programs such as Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, and Food Stamps. If refugees over the age of 65, however, do not attain citizenship within 7 years of their

arrival in the United States, the refugees are no longer eligible for these benefit programs.

The Louisville Elderly Refugee Program began in January 2008 in order to assist this especially vulnerable population overcome these and other hurdles. The program hopes to improve English skills of its participants to prepare the refugees to take the citizenship test, to provide opportunities for socialization, and to assist the refugees learn how to access mainstream social services available in the Louisville community. The program meets twice per week from 10:00 a.m. until noon on Wednesday and Friday mornings at Gateway Community Church on Southern Parkway.
Supervisor: Jason Crosby, Elderly Program/Driver's Ed Instructor

Requirements: Mentors will be asked to work with one elderly refugee for one year. Additionally, mentors will be expected to spend two hours per month with the refugee. In order for mentors to become more familiar with the elderly refugee population and the elderly refugee program, before working with one of the elderly refugee participants, mentors will be asked to attend one of the program gatherings on Wednesday or Friday morning.

Volunteer Impact: Mentors, who spend time with the refugees outside of our regularly schedule program times, can greatly assist these refugees overcome the numerous obstacles they face. Simply by spending time with the refugees will help them avoid feelings of isolation. Mentors who assist the refugees in speaking English will help prepare them for the citizenship test. Mentors who show the refugees other sights around town will help the clients feel more at home in their new environment.