

Mary and Joseph Packs

Bridge Refugee Services is an ecumenical non-profit with offices in Knoxville and Chattanooga TN. The Bridge receives refugees through the affiliate Episcopal Migration Ministries. Like all refugee resettlement agencies, their goal is to receive and stabilize each refugee family sent to them, helping them become self-sufficient and providing 90 days of services. Agencies are provided \$925 per refugee to provide goods and services. The Bridge is responsible for getting additional support from local agencies and congregations. **The closest refugee resettlement to Huntsville is the Bridge Refugee Services in Chattanooga TN.**

In addition to finding affordable housing and securing utilities deposits, the agency must provide refugee families with basic furnishings, basic kitchen items, basic bathroom and bedroom items, and personal care supplies. All this must come from the \$925 per person unless additional resources are provided. This amount in no way covers the expenses.

For example, the Initial Settling costs for Refugees in Chattanooga:

Deposit for Rent: \$300

Rent first month: \$550-600

Utility deposit: \$217

First week food: \$100

Pocket money: \$40

Temporary phone with minutes: \$40

Bus ticket: \$50

You can see how additional support with resources is a must for them to provide for the families.

One way The Bridge seeks help from congregations is in the form of "Mary and Joseph Packs." These are first month survival packs. *Chattanooga is gearing up for the arrival of over 60 families in the coming months and they could use our help.*

Huntsville churches can be Welcoming Friends--providing a Mary and Joseph pack for one family in the coming months. Contact Judy Guerry at guershea@comcast.net to find out more.

NEEMA Outreach Ministry in Chattanooga.

NEEMA, ("grace," in English), is a not-for-profit organization associated with the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern TN. Father Peter Kanyi, a native of Kenya is the Director of the Outreach and a board of trustees serves it. NEEMA is an incredible and unique ministry to refugees, providing a safe place to find counsel and heal—including a deep respect for each person's story.

(Please see the PowerPoint on NEEMA for more information.)

From Father Peter Kanyi: "We have to remember that refugees come from dire circumstances, some spending years in refugee camps. They are traumatized, having lost their homes, livelihoods, and family members. It is a tremendous shock to be resettled in a foreign land where you don't know the language, customs, how to manage money or who to trust. You often feel as if you are still living temporarily. You are confused, scared, and susceptible to being taken advantage of."

NEEMA receives some funding from the Episcopal diocese in East Tennessee and also from local congregations and foundations. Their annual budget is approximately \$70 K. Their primary services include literacy and citizenship – helping refugees connect to services, and be able to navigate their new world. They are currently serving approximately 130 refugees. They obtain clients through word-of-mouth, as well as from The Bridge. Examples of services include establishment of a community garden for refugee families and job placement in area businesses.

Their most pressing needs are for classroom supplies (including literacy and citizenship books) and help with transportation (donation of low cost reliable vehicles).

Huntsville Congregations can be Friends of NEEMA—offering to purchase classroom supplies, or purchasing gift cards, or giving donations towards their work. Please contact Gary Rasponi at hd2live@yahoo.com