

Resettlement Ministry at First Baptist Church in New Haven

In April of 2013 a newly resettled refugee, a young Congolese man, started attending our congregation, beginning an amazing chain of events which led to this ministry. At first Joshua attended alone, then brought his fiancé, and then his fiancé's sister and son. This led to a realization that we were being called to help these families adjust to our culture, and be successful in their resettlement here in New Haven.



A **Resettlement Team** was organized to:

- give leadership to a more intentional ministry with families in the process of resettlement in our area, starting with those now attending our congregation.
- identify ways in which our congregation can help support these families in their quest for successful resettlement.
- be aware of, consider, and promote ways in which these families may enhance our ministry in the New Haven area (such as a growing ministry with French speaking peoples), etc.



Our congregation rose to the occasion, and many became involved in one or more of the support roles indicated below. As a result, other families have followed. Now, three short years after its beginning, we have 9 families totaling 55 individuals (including 22 children, 10 teenagers, and 23 adults) who have become involved because of our Resettlement Ministry effort.



Services we thought our church might be able to offer these families included:

- Limited financial support
- Conversational English (Sundays following fellowship hour)
- Mentor relationships
 - Help them master shopping (groceries, clothing, etc)
 - Help with planning a budget
 - Help with interviewing skills necessary for finding a job
 - Accompany them “on street” looking for job opportunities on their own
- Friendship – invitations to dinner, etc. (cultural inclusion)
- Part time work (janitorial services at FBC)
- Advocacy (support, encouragement, backing, sponsorship, promotion)
 - Focus on finding jobs
 - Focus on children’s issues related to school or need for socialization and play
 - Accompany them to medical emergencies
 - Help them find medical coverage
 - Transportation to appointments
- Help them find needed furnishings for their apartments
- Help them develop needed computer skills
- English as a Second Language classes at our site? (not yet a reality)
- Help them with shopping when/if necessary (using coupons, special promotions, etc.)
- Pro-bono medical home visit if appropriate (to avoid emergency room visit)



IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Service) is the sponsoring agency of all these families. First Baptist seeks to pick up where IRIS leaves off, helping families be successful establishing their ‘new lives’ here in New Haven.