Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program (CCRRP) has a rich history of serving primary refugees in our community since 1975. The Refugee Resettlement Program meets the regional needs of the refugees designated to resettle here, either through family reunification or as “free cases” assigned to our local community. New refugees are at their most vulnerable as they enter the United States. As the only resettlement agency in Southeastern Minnesota, CCRRP seeks to address the most fundamental needs of all new refugees such as access to shelter, food, clothing, income, medical care, education, and employment.

Operating under the umbrella of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) in collaboration with Department of State/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (DOS/PRM), CCRRP carries out refugee services to address needs by providing direct case management and networking with the intention of building financial independence. Financial self-sufficiency is achieved through acquiring safe and stable housing, asset building, financial literacy training, and basic employment soft skills training which assists refugees in gaining the ability to secure employment, a more sustainable and significant source of financial independence. We also provide cultural, transportation, shopping and budgeting orientations.

We welcomed 68 individuals in fiscal year 2019. Refugee individuals and families we cared for came from Burma (Myanmar), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia, We saw cases consisting of one individual to cases comprised of 2-8 individuals.

As a program, our greatest strength is our intensive client-centered case management. Goals established for refugees are intended to: address immediate social/educational needs, attain a stable environment, develop skills for employment, understand basic financial principles, and promote seamless integration. The process we utilize entails an intake and assessment, goal development, intervention, referrals, monitoring and reassessing throughout the service period and transitioning services seamlessly to other service providers at the end of the 90 day resettlement period. The goal of
 resettlement is empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills that will assist them on the road to self-sufficiency. Refugees want what many Americans want: to feel a part of their community, gain employment, and ultimately find a place to call “home.”

Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement continues to facilitate the Match Grant employment program, which assists refugees that arrive with work history and some fluency in finding employment within 180 days after their arrival. Match Grant services include resume building, employment soft skills training, interviewing skills training, job search assistance, and post-employment advocacy and mediation. We served 23 individuals in the Match Grant program this year. CCRRP also facilitates the Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) program. RCA is an eight month government funded cash assistance program for refugees that arrive as singles or married couples without children.

Through a USCCB Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) grant we worked with community volunteers to purchase groceries for newly arrived families with cultural good items giving them a sense of welcome and food security in the first few days in their new home. We thank all the volunteers that have dedicated hundreds of hours to be family mentors for families and help guide them in their new community as well as befriend them, living the words of “welcoming the stranger.”

Volunteers can make a tremendous difference in the life of a refugee. One example of how volunteers can truly change a refugee’s life is the story of one woman who was enrolled in our employment program Match Grant. She was highly motivated to gain employment but she was struggling with English, which was making it difficult for her to find a job. Actually, she had a fair bit of English, but lacked the confidence to speak. Through our volunteer program, we were able to match her with a volunteer who came to her house twice a week to practice conversational English. After about a month of one-on-one English tutoring we were surprised at how much confidence she had gained. This confidence allowed her to interview and hired at a local company. We credit the volunteer who took the time to sit with her and help her practice her English. Now she can support her and her family as they build a new life in our community.

In fiscal year 2019, we continued to see our community’s welcome of refugees through donations of essential household items (beds/tables/chairs, new pillows, etc), Children’s Welcome Baskets, Hygiene Bags, Cleaning Supply Kits, and Survival Kits. These kits/baskets continue to be a wonderful way for individuals and groups that want to support refugees in our community, to assist them in gaining the basic items needed as they establish themselves in the community. Each family, depending on the size, receives an estimated $1,000-$2000 dollars in donated items, completely from the
generosity of the people in our community. We are so thankful for the support from all the communities in Southern Minnesota that have helped us this year.

We continue to recognize refugees’ gaining financial literacy skills as one of the most important components to helping refugees move towards financial stability and independence. We provide each refugee that arrives through our program with two classes on financial literacy that cover topics such as the difference between needs and wants, establishing savings, setting long-term financial goals, asset building, and various budgeting techniques. Classes are provided in various languages and interpretation assistance is also provided.

Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program’s mission is to meet the needs of newly arrived refugees by providing one-on-one case management to guide them on their new journey and empower them in their new life.