

A Crack in the Rock

VRRP's Volunteer Newsletter

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Our world often seems to be a hard, rocky place. Manmade and natural disasters strip people of what they need to survive. But Vermont is a crack in the rock, widened by the smiles, persistent efforts, and adventurous spirit of its people. Thanks to 254 volunteers, we are offering a new life to people who have endured the harshest conditions in hopes of a new opportunity.

Out of a Crack

By Judy Scott

"For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness."

-Barack Obama, January 20, 2009

Employment is one of our country's most serious concerns. At VRRP, employment is also one of our most serious concerns for our clients. Recently I was speaking with a community member who suggested that it isn't right that refugees could take jobs away from American-born people. He felt that job opportunities should go first to our own and then, if there were still jobs remaining that needed to be filled, those would go to newcomers.

As the mother of three grown children, with only the youngest still in school (and even she will be out looking for a job after next year), I can understand how he feels. I'm very worried about the future of our country. I'm worried about how my children will manage in a worsening economy. I'm worried about having enough to live on when my husband and I retire.

During my lifetime our

economy has been expanding, much like the westward expansion during the pioneer days of our history. There were slowdowns during that westward expansion. If a wagon wheel broke, the whole wagon train had to stop to fix it before they could move forward again. But the progress was relentless. Now I feel like I want to circle the wagons and defend my family.

Our country's history has been one of people finding opportunities and working hard to make the best of them. That's what westward expansion was. That's what my ancestors did when in 1833 the government of the United States of America granted them land to farm in Indiana. They were offered an opportunity and they had to work hard to make something of it. What did they use to clear the rocks and plow the land? Only the tools they had brought with them, their own physical strength and their own mental determination.

Nearly 100 years later it was my grandfather who was working the farm. He and his forebears had built a stable and secure livelihood for the family. That was when

the Great Depression descended on them with a nation-wide financial crisis and a drought that killed farms. My father remembers years of always being hungry. He searched out and took advantage of every chance he had to make money and struggled to get himself through college. That was when World War II broke out, devastating all his plans for his future. But he didn't allow his spirit to be devastated. He changed course, and joined the Navy.

This is the history of our country. It is this that has made our country great. We Americans are people who work hard to employ our creative energy to make the most out of every situation, good or bad. The reason we're tough and smart and creative is that our ancestors came from different cultures all over the world. It is the toughest and smartest and most creative people who were most likely to survive the war or genocide in their country of origin and to make it to the United States. This is the history of our country.

When they arrived here, the challenge persisted. As fast

VRRP's Mission

The Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program brings hope and opportunity to the lives of refugees and immigrants. We act to defend human rights, promote self-sufficiency and education, and forge community partnerships through a full range of services and programs.

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A Year at VRRP

By Deirdre Smith

The past year as an Americorps VISTA in the volunteer and donation departments at VRRP was a whirlwind of new experiences and a lesson in unpredictability. Through working and volunteering, I met more families than I could even begin to count. I knew I was in for something when I started last September and found out that over 50 people were to arrive that same month.

Instantly, I was thrown into piles of winter coats, sheets, mismatched bed frames, scattered silverware, pots without lids, lids without pots, kitchen tables, chairs, mattresses and household cleaning supplies. Everything needed to be arranged for the families en route: bags of winter clothing to bring to the airport (merely guessing at the size of the people to come); laundry baskets filled with toiletries and cleaning supplies; beds in need of making; groceries to be delivered; volunteers to call and volunteers to call back. Time was not forgiving, but after many days of long hours in the office, I began to grow accustomed to what needed to be done before a new family arrived and some of

the essential things that needed to be done with this family in the next few months that followed.

This is not to say that it was easy to do, or that every family was the same, for I quickly threw out the idea that what I expected to happen would ever actually happen. It is only to say that for the 329 individuals who came from October 1 of 2007, to September 30 of 2008, I had to be ready with beds, mattresses, silverware, sheets, blankets, towels, kitchen chairs, couches, tables, pots, pans, lamps, volunteers, and an enormous amount of flexibility.

All year, we would talk to new volunteers about resettling 150 people in the previous year and that 50 of these people came in one month! We had no idea that over twice this amount would be resettled during my year at VRRP, meaning that twice the number of donations and twice the number of volunteers needed to be found, and that 50 people a month would be about average in the spring and summer months. A very slow winter where very few people arrived from November to March didn't prepare me to begin receiving multiple families on the same day, sometimes

two or three days a week. Nor did I know that resettlement for Somalis, Meskhetian Turks, Sudanese, Burundians and Congolese would slow to a trickle, and we would soon be receiving people from Bhutan, Burma and Iraq, countries whose long histories I wish I knew more about. The unpredictable nature of refugee resettlement work was showing its skin.

In addition to not being prepared to sort through pieces of bed frames to find a match (a very exciting newly acquired skill), I wasn't prepared to volunteer with a family from Iraq. At VRRP, we tell volunteers that they shouldn't request to work with a family from a particular country, culture, religion, area of the world and so on, despite one's own experience. Even so, despite that disclaimer, I was looking forward to building on my interest in the Great Lakes region of Africa through volunteering with a family from Congo or Burundi. I had some knowledge of French and had spent time in Uganda and Rwanda. It was exciting to find words in Luganda, which I had learned in Uganda, and in Kirundi that were the

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Giving back to VRRP

By Gabriel Poth

Gabriel served as the Volunteer Office Intern for the fall semester of 2008. His great work with our donations and clients helped over 100 people transition into life in Burlington last fall. The Volunteer Department at VRRP misses him and wishes him well in the future!

I came as a refugee to Vermont and VRRP welcomed me and trained me to be self sufficient. I went to school and came back to be part of this great team of helpers. I have learned from VRRP during my internship not only to be self sufficient but what it means to be a helper. For college or high school students who want to do community service or an internship, I encourage you to be part of VRRP because it will be the experience of a life time. I have enjoyed and met friends who care for people in need.

The Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program is thanking you in advance for your donations. Your donations help us to provide the much needed assistance to the new refugees who join our community.

Most of our refugee families come to Vermont with nothing in their hands, but with great hope in their hearts. There is great eagerness to start a new life where they are safe and allowed to work and live without fear of persecution.

In my own words as a former refugee, I came to Vermont with little

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photo by Karin Johnson

UVM Grad Student Seeks Subjects for Research Study

By Haley Dienst

Hello! My name is Haley Dienst. I am a graduate student at UVM studying nutrition. This spring, I am doing a research project exploring the food experiences of refugees in Vermont, and the role volunteers and host families play in this experience. I hope to gain a better understanding of some of the challenges refugees faced in adapting to the food here in Vermont.

What knowledge did they come with and what did they learn after they arrived? What foods were unfamiliar to them and how did they react to this food? How did they react when they first went grocery shopping? I have learned that volunteers and host families play a huge role in helping refugees adjust to the new food environment here in Vermont, and I am curious

to hear how you do it. In the end, I hope this research will illuminate some ways that the nutrition community can help refugees better and more easily adjust to the food environment in Vermont, as well as some ways we can help you, the volunteers, help the refugees you work with make this adjustment.

For this project, I would like to conduct separate interviews with 8-10 volunteers and the refugees they work with. Through these interviews, I hope to develop a better understanding of the food experiences of refugees—both through the refugees' eyes and through the eyes of the volunteers. Some examples of questions I will ask: what sort of foods did or do you prepare or consume with the refugees you work with? If you helped the refugees you work with go grocery shopping, what was that experience like? What foods did you notice the refugees were unfamiliar

with? I would like to conduct separate interviews with the refugees you work with to ask them similar questions, to get an idea of what these experiences were like for them. I expect the total time commitment to be about 2 hours each for the refugee and the volunteer.

Please understand that while the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program is assisting me in recruiting participants for this project, they are not actually involved in the research. And whether or not you choose to participate will have no affect on your role within or relationship with the VRRP.

If you have any questions, or would be interested in participating, please contact me, Haley Dienst, at (802)760-7100 or by email: hdienst@uvm.edu. Thank you!

Television to Switch from Analog to Digital Coupons available for converter boxes

by Karin Johnson

On February 17, 2009, Vermont will be changing to digital television. This means thousands of analog tv sets across the nation will no longer work, many of which include those that are in the homes of our refugee families.

An analog tv set can still be used with the help of a converter box. The device converts the analog feed into digital, making an old tv set still useful. To apply for a box check out:

Go to www.dtv2009.gov or call 1-888-388-2009.

There is currently a waiting list, so apply today! For current volunteers, assisting families to apply for coupons for a converter box would greatly help to make sure they can still use their television when the switch occurs.

COME, JOIN, SERVE

Upcoming VRRP Volunteer Orientations

Friday, February 20 at 12:30 p.m.

**Bring a brown bag lunch,
we provide dessert!**

Tuesday, March 10 at 5:30 p.m.

**Munchies served to tide you
over after work!**

**Please contact Karin with
any questions at 338-4632 or
kjohnson@uscrvt.org**

We hope you can join us!

Enriching Lives, Classes Offered to VRRP Clients

by Wendy Reid, Relationship Enrichment Counselour at VRRP

In 2007, the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP) initiated the Relationship Enrichment program, and designed workshops to provide communication skills, financial literacy, and stress and conflict management to our different refugee communities. VRRP has been delivering the communications skills workshop since the beginning of the program.

The second workshop, on financial literacy, started in June 2008. VRRP initiated the third workshop (on stress and conflict management) in January 2009. VRRP has been very successful with the first two workshops and is looking forward to working with different communities with the third workshop.

The different components of the Relationship Enrichment program are described below to give you a sense of what we do.

Workshop I - Focuses on four communication skills which are:

1. Showing Understanding Skill – Learn to put yourself in the other person's place and listen with strong interest

2. Expression Skill – Learn to communicate more clearly what you think and feel and need in a respectful way.

3. Discussion Skill – Learn how to hold calm and productive conversations.

4. Problem Solving Skill – Learn how to find solutions that are good for both you and the other person.

Workshop II

Managing Financial Decisions as a family.

Topics include, discussing your values and priorities in your home country, how and why these values and priorities change in America. Using communication skills to make suggestions for financial decisions that are good for your family, saving strategies, building a good credit history, and using credit cards wisely.

Workshop III

Stress and Conflict Management.

Topics include reducing the meaning of conflict by building trust, changing your patterns of runaway emotions, using skills to stop talking, and using skills to talk later when you are ready.

Workshops are being offered at VRRP on:

- Friday mornings, 10 am – 12 pm

Currently members of our new communities are attending workshops to help their transition and adjustment to life in the United States.

Any refugees interested in enrolling, should call Wendy Reid at 802-338-4628 or leave a message, and she will get back to them.

The Top 10 Ten Reasons to Volunteer Year 'Round courtesy of United Way

1. You can make a difference.
2. It's fun.
3. The pay won't put you in a higher tax bracket.
4. It's a great family activity.
5. Your mom would be proud of you.
6. Meet new people.
7. Spend time with a group of friends.
8. Learn new skills.
9. Fulfill a graduation requirement.
10. You'll feel great!

Interested in volunteering with VRRP?

Contact Karin Johnson at
kjohanson@uscrvt.org or at 338-4632.

Join us in making a difference in
refugees' lives and in yours!



photo by Karin Johnson

Q&A: Rose Mapendo draws on her traumatic life to help others

UNHCR News

WASHINGTON D.C., United States, January 23 (UNHCR) – In 1998, four years after the Rwandan genocide claimed the lives of nearly 1 million ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, the Rwandan Tutsi army invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), triggering another wave of violence against Congolese Tutsis. Rose Mapendo and her husband, both Tutsis, were living with their seven children in the eastern DRC when the campaign against Tutsis began. She went through a terrifying ordeal and flight before being offered a new home in the United States, where she has become an inspiring advocate of peace and support for refugees. Rose, who lives in Phoenix, Arizona, recently spoke to UNHCR Senior Public Information Officer Tim Irwin in Washington. Excerpts from the interview:

As a result of the anti-Tutsi violence, you and your family were arrested in 1998. What happened?

The government sent policemen to my house. They were looking for my husband. After they left, I told my husband to

go into hiding. I knew the situation was dangerous for men, but I didn't realize it would also be dangerous for women and children. Some time later, the military returned to my house and took us away on a truck to a prison camp.

What were the conditions like in the prison?

It was more like a death camp than a prison. I was there for 16 months. We were crowded into rooms with no doors and with guards always watching us. We weren't allowed outside. The men were killed quickly, including my husband. Many children died from cold, from sleeping on cement, from hunger. Every day they would come and take some people away and shoot them. I didn't realize when I was brought there that I was pregnant. When I gave birth I named my twins for the commanders of the camp, which is considered a great honour. Later, when the order came to kill all of us, the commander had me and my family transferred to another prison in Kinshasa [capital of the DRC]. Two weeks later I was sent to a pro-

tection centre run by the Red Cross.

From Kinshasa you were evacuated to Cameroon as part of a US government emergency programme to resettle Tutsi refugees from the Congo. What did you think about coming to the United States?

It was a tremendous happiness to know that I would be allowed to live with my kids, that we would not be killed. In the death camp we thought every day would be the last day. Every morning was like a gift. You cannot imagine how happy I was to know that I would be allowed to live like other people.

What challenges did you face on arrival in the United States in July 2000?

There were so many challenges! I couldn't speak English, I had no friends, I was a single mother with nine children in a new country. But I was so happy that I was in a safe place.

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photo by Karin Johnson

Bhutanese Knitting Group
Members of the Bhutanese Community have been meeting in the past months knitting scarves, socks, hats and many different items to sell locally. Yarn donations or weaving yarn needed! Call the intern office with donations at 338-4633.

Thank you to the two local Lion's Clubs, for providing many of VRRP's clients with vouchers for glasses. Your support and generosity are invaluable!

The vouchers have provided clients with a good pair of reading glasses to help them in their English as a Second Language classes!

Giving Back to VRRP

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English. That English was full of accent, more than that, American English was totally different from the English I used to hear in Kenya. Therefore, the communication was zero. I came in to Vermont carrying, an IOM bag, no clothes, no blanket, no cooking pots, no shoes, nothing. I was provided my basic needs by the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program because of donations by people like you to help people like me.

I was separated from my parents at a very young age due to the violence in Sudan. It was necessary for me to flee and walk on bare foot for 5000 miles to get away from my village to Ethiopia. I grew up in a refugee camp, a life of an uncertain future. I lived day by day thinking about where I should go to find something to eat or water to drink. I used to think every single day of where my parents were, of what had happened to them. Would I ever see them again? All of the above issues were a big load with no solution to me because I had no any way of

finding them. However, the relief came into my life about seven years ago when I was accepted to come to the United States of America! Now I can communicate with my mother by telephone once a year. I am happy that I can hear her voice, even if I haven't seen her for eighteen years.

My first few months in the US were gloomy because I did not know many things. Starting in the kitchen where everything was strange to me, to school, to my first job at F.A.H.C, to driving and to the community at large, but the VRRP team worked hard to train me to be able to do many of the above challenges which I had. They helped me.

I came to Burlington, Vermont in April of 2001. I felt really cold, but I was given a jacket, gloves and a hat by the people from Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program that met me at the airport. I felt warm after I dressed up but I was still afraid of the cold.



Now we are starting a new year. I would personally like to ask you to think about the refugees and pledge whatever you can to donate to VRRP so that we can continue to provide the needed things for new families in the coming year. It would be great also if you could ask your neighbors if they might help us too. It is a good community here in Vermont and I am so glad that I came here and now that I can give back what was given to me by helping in the donation department at Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program.

A Year at VRRP

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same, and I was looking forward to learning more Swahili. After living on my own in Uganda, I felt comfortable with many people from the region and wanted to continue to learn about that part of the world. However, just like my expectations of having a slow, gradual learning curve for my new job, my idea of volunteering with a family from East or Central Africa flew out the window.

At the end of October, I began volunteering with the first family to arrive through VRRP from Iraq: a couple with their two young children. I had no idea what to expect. I didn't know anything about them, they didn't know anything about me, they didn't know much, if any English, and my knowledge of how to say "book" and "hello" in Arabic didn't get us too far. Furthermore, I didn't know which social mannerisms I understood and which ones I hadn't even begun to comprehend. Did they want me to visit, was the visit over, where did politeness begin and end, were they yelling at each other, were they excited, or was that just the vocal intonation?

The children could be terrors, but they were doted on. The tolerance granted to

the children shocked me at first, but as they came out of their shells, began to absorb their surroundings and engaged with their new world, I realized that they really were no more likely to misbehave than most American children and were often much more curious and willing to learn. The parents too began to adapt to their surroundings and they soon realized that I had no more idea of what I was doing with them than they knew why I was there.

It was a mutual learning process made even more difficult because of the language barrier. Even though I visited the family often, took the family to the grocery store, helped with the mail, registered the children for school, made sure the family had bus passes and tried as best as I could to answer questions they had, I began to question my role as a volunteer. The family was very independent and was creating its own network in the community so I didn't feel that I was helping them in ways that they wanted. In fact, it seemed like they didn't need my help and didn't really care if I visited or not, so I let them go, but not completely.

It didn't matter to me if I was needed or not, but I cared about the family, so I talked with them through an Arabic-

speaking friend and it became clear again that there was so much about them that I didn't understand. The family made it clear that they did appreciate what I did with them, so I continued.

And I'm glad I did. Everything, from searching for apartments day after day once the family received a much anticipated Section 8 voucher, to being amazed at how well the family was learning English; from bringing the family to visit new Iraqi families as they slowly began to arrive months later, to finding the children a much coveted video of Cinderella so they would no longer mimic the German versions they found online, taught me more and more about the family and how new arrivals create their own lives in the United States. I still look forward to my visits with the family, but now it is just as likely that I will help them with a piece of mail as it is that we will end up talking about school, Islam, or perhaps I'll go home with a recipe for one of their delicious meals. Just like I never knew what to expect with my work at VRRP, I never can be too sure what to expect when I visit my family. And I can't say that I would want things any other way.

Rose Mapendo
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What is Mapendo International and what is your role?

Mapendo International works to help those whose lives have been destroyed by war and violence and who have been overlooked by existing humanitarian assistance. Its founder [Sasha Chanoff] was part of the rescue team that evacuated me to Cameroon. He asked me and the other refugees so many questions about our lives. Then he asked if he could name his organization in my honour. I believe he thought that, through my story, people would get a better understanding of what it means to be a refugee.

Since coming to the US you've been involved in a number of events to raise awareness of refugee issues, including the launch last month in New York of UNHCR's "Gimme Shelter" campaign. What motivates you?

Many people know about refugees from what they have seen on television or read in the newspaper. Because I have lived

through it, I want to help them to see what refugees have gone through. I also want to remind them that refugees are just people like us. Because they are in a refugee camp doesn't mean they don't deserve happiness. We need to give refugees reasons to hope.

How are your twins who were born in the prison camp?

They're doing great. They are almost ten. They're in fourth grade. My oldest son is in college and my daughter is studying to be a nurse. I am so thankful for all the people who helped us and gave us hope. I came here as a widow without anything and now I can look at my kids and see they are successful like other children. It is a great joy and I thank the US government for what it's done for refugees.

A Year at VRRP
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Working closely with this family from Iraq and interacting with many other families from different countries along the way, has opened my eyes wider to how different people experience life as a refugee, both as an individual and a member of a greater community, whether it is based on country, religion, or another social group. These observations have helped to prepare me to work at Vermont Refugee Assistance (soon to be Vermont Immigration and Asylum Advocates), which has recently moved to Burlington. At VRA I am exposed to the other side of the immigration spectrum and see how challenging life can be for people whether a family member is in detention facing deportation, someone has spent years seeking asylum and doesn't have the right to work, or a refugee or legal permanent resident is fighting a potential deportation order because of a sometimes minor criminal infraction.

The work at VRRP and VRA has shown me the never-ending struggle of creating a new life in a foreign country, but it has also shown me how strong each person who forges a new life here is and how welcoming the community can be in this mutual learning process. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to work at VRRP and look forward to all there is to learn at VRA.

Out of a Crack
Continued from page 1

as they could, they had to learn a new language and a new culture. Failure often played a strong hand. The odds against success were enormous. It took luck and persistence to find ultimate success. In many of the countries our ancestors came from, it wouldn't have been possible. What made it possible here was that opportunities went to the best qualified person. The most successful businesses in this country were often started by immigrants who, by dint of creativity and hard work, produced the best product for the lowest price. This also is the history of our country.

Because my father had to do whatever he could to earn money during the Depression, he learned as a teenager how to fly planes so

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The Opportunity to Give

by Kimberly Fankhauser

As I walked through the North Street apartment with my Bhutanese friend on one of the first cold Vermont days this winter, I noticed that the family was in need of some more warm blankets. Though I myself did not have any extra to give, I told my friend and her mother-in-law that I would look for some. Soon, the idea came to me to write an email to my work colleagues. Many knew that we had hosted a Bhutanese family over the summer. I simply asked if any had extra blankets for this refugee family.

The response that I got was more than encouraging. Not only did my co-workers bring in blankets, but they brought in warm jackets, sweaters, boots, slippers, towels, and so on. I had more than enough for the family in need and was able to give to other refugee families as well.

As Christmas was approaching, due to my connection with the VRRP and my co-workers' newly-found connection, we decided to do our annual "Christmas charity" with the VRRP. Co-workers brought in items for new refugee welcome baskets and used boots. While other items were the focus of our collection, blankets and jackets still came in.

Personally, I do not think that the giving will stop with Christmas. Once people found the opportunity to give, they gave. In our Western culture we have so much. There are always things we have that we don't really need while those things may truly be needed by someone else.

Out of a Crack

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he could work as a crop duster. That money helped put him through college. When he graduated and his career plans were derailed by WWII, he joined the Navy where his skills as a pilot were valuable to the war effort. He worked hard at every opportunity he was given and some paid off. This is the history of our country.

Like my father, those of our ancestors who were tough, smart, creative, and lucky bequeathed to us, their descendants, the stability that they strove to achieve and the invaluable qualities that their actions proved. This is the history of our country.

I saw a new chapter of this recently when I was talking with one of our superb volunteers. He didn't think he was doing anything extraordinarily amazing and, indeed, what he and his wife are doing is not out of the ordinary for them.

They amazed me for two very different reasons. One, they're busy with their jobs, their family, and the lives they were born into but still they find time to help a new person who is just beginning their life here. Beyond that, they are truly changing that new person's life just by being involved, just by doing what they know how to do.

The volunteer I spoke with is named Damian. He and his wife, Tina, volunteer together. Spending time and talking with the family they're volunteering with, they realized how eager the father was to start working and supporting his family. They also understand, as we all do, that a fundamental fact about American society is that employment promotes success. So they set to work searching out job possibilities. When they found a good one in environmental services at Fletcher-Allen Health Care, they learned that the application had to be done on-line. Damian took the father to the library where computers are available to the public, created an account, and they did the application together.

One of the pleasures for Damian in this was the conversations they had in spite of the father's limited English about his past experience. Like almost all refugees, he had survived what would

seem to be devastating experiences. He used them to strengthen his character and his resolve. But his confidence is still a bit shaky. He's been in this culture only a short time and knows that he has a great deal to learn. This is where both Damian and VRRP's employment counselor, Kristen McCaskey, can help. Between Kristen's individual sessions with clients, the employment workshops we offer to all clients, and Damian's own work experience, newcomers can learn what they need to know about the American employment culture.

Case in point: when FAHC called to schedule an interview, our client didn't know exactly where it was to take place. Having been lost in the hospital on several occasions, I have great admiration for anyone who can master that maze of buildings. Fortunately, our client had Damian, who offered to accompany him so they could find their way together. Normally, it would be VRRP's employment counselor who would fill this function but Kristen was very appreciative of Damian's time in covering this. And his time was well-spent – due to this refugee-volunteer collaboration, the client got the job. He's thrilled to have this opportunity to prove himself. I'm sure that FAHC got the best-qualified employee. This is the newest chapter of the history of our country.

As President Obama said in his inaugural speech, "...we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness." I am asking you to join with us to use the good that comes from a patchwork heritage for our common good. We need your help to find jobs for people whose dream is to work hard to support their families, people who have endured years of deprivation in order to come to this country and contribute to its society, people who know more than most of us about how to survive tough times.

We are now organizing an Employment Task Force made up of volunteers and our employment counselors to work together to search out job opportunities and to make connections with employers. If you can contribute in any way to this effort, please contact Judy Scott at jscott@uscrivt.org or 654-1700 to let her know you want to join us. Help us give our business leaders the best and hardest-working employees they could hire. In the history of our country, this is the time to step forward. We've got a place waiting for you.

VRRP STAFF PHONE DIRECTORY

Chiangkuach Mabil	Americorps Community Engagement	802-338-4618
Fatuma Bulle	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1706
Htun Sein	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1728
Jacqueline Rose	Coordinator of Interpreting Services	802-654-1706
Jenelle Eli	Employment Counselor	802-654-1717
Judy Scott	Director	802-654-1700
Karin Johnson	AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer Office	802-338-4632
Kristen McCaskey	Employment Counselor	802-338-4625
Loan Nguyen	Financial Support Specialist	802-654-1701
Marcia Stone	Coordinator of Volunteer Services	802-338-4627
Matt Thompson	Coordinator of Programs	802-338-4625
Melissa Lang	ELT Coordinator	802-654-1704
Mukiza Noel	Case Manager	802-338-4617
Nada Popovac	Front Office Manager	802-655-1963
Rashid Hussein	Senior Case Manager	802-654-1707
Shawna Wakeham	AmeriCorps*VISTA ELT Office	802-655-2656
Supriya Serchan	Case Manager	802-654-1716
Tam Truong	Accountant	802-654-1733
Volunteers and Interns	Volunteer Office	802-338-4633
Wendy Reid	Relationship Enrichment Coordinator	802-338-1860
<i>e-mail addresses follow this pattern: Marcia Stone = mstone@uscrivt.org (Exception: Volunteer Office = volunteer@uscrivt.org)</i>		

community buzz

Volunteers: What Are You Learning? Share a few words with others!

Each month, we pride ourselves on the fact that our newsletter includes articles by volunteers, former refugees, and staff members. Input from such a wide range of people involved in the resettlement process enables us to offer many different perspectives on the experience to our readers.

We would love to include an article about **your** experience, which will help us keep volunteers and community members abreast of challenges, successes, and questions that volunteers face. If you have a story to share but don't have the time to put it into words, one of our volunteers is a professional writer and has offered to work with other volunteers to capture their stories.

If you'd like to discuss an idea for an article, please contact Karin at 338-4632 or kjohnson@uscrvt.org.

Thank you to Deirdre Smith and Gabriel Poth for sharing their stories of working and volunteering with VRRP.

Urgent Donation Needs at VRRP

In preparation for the arrivals coming in 2009 we are in high need of certain items to help provide for our new families. We are in need of:
**winter boots, twin and full beds,
dressers, kitchen tables and chairs,
and couches**

Please call the Volunteer Office with any donations at 338-4633.

Volunteer Orientation

Volunteer Orientations provide a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our organization, our volunteer program, and volunteer opportunities. Marcia and Karin will be present to discuss our programs and answer your questions, and we hope that experienced volunteers will stop by during the second hour to share their stories or concerns. While attendance at one orientation is mandatory before beginning service, they are also a great time for new and veteran volunteers to check in with VRRP staff.

Two Upcoming Orientations:

Friday **February 20** from **12:30 to 2 p.m.**

Tuesday **March 10** from **5:30 to 7 p.m.**

We look forward to seeing you there!

If you have any questions contact Karin at 338-4632

We need your input volunteers...

What will help you? Please call Marcia Stone, Volunteer Coordinator, and let us know what trainings will have the most value to you.

338-4627

mstone@uscrvt.org

Thank You Donors!

This year we had a very successful donation drive for winter outerwear items from our surrounding communities.

Schools, churches, companies, and many committed individuals helped us address our need of getting warm items to our clients by donating bag upon bag of coats!

We are now confident that our clients will be greeted with a warm coat, hat, scarf and gloves or mittens upon their arrival this winter. Thank you!!

We still need winter boots! Contact our interns at 338-4633 with donations.

Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program

462 Hegeman Ave, Ste 101, Colchester, VT 05446

Phone: 802-655-1963 Fax: 802-655-4020

E-mail: volunteer@uscrvt.org

Volunteer Office Phone: 802-338-4633

Directions to VRRP

Coming from downtown Winooski, follow Route 15 east past St. Michael's College. Continue past Camp Johnson Military Facility. Take a left at the next light and turn into Ethan Allen Complex.

Coming from Essex, follow Route 15 west past Susie Wilson Road. Turn right at the next stop light to turn into Ethan Allen Complex.

Hegeman Avenue is the third road on the right. VRRP is at 462 Hegeman Avenue (the third building on your left — a brick building with a green on white sign out front.)