

A Crack in the Rock

VRRP's Volunteer Newsletter

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VRRP is a field office of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

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Photo: Rose McNulty

Out of a Crack

By Judy Scott

I was asked a question last month that's been reverberating in my mind ever since. It started when we received the word from our national office, the U. S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, that we would receive a new family the following week. They were originally from Burma but had spent the last 12 years in a refugee camp in Thailand. Since there was no host family available at that time, we had to find an apartment immediately. We talked with a landlord who had never rented to refugees before and was leery of it. He didn't want to rent his three-bedroom apartment to such a large family: seven people. He wanted to rent it to three people. In the end, he saw that seven refugees would use less water and take better care of it than three college students and he agreed.

Then we sprang into action to furnish it. We furnish our clients' apartments entirely through donations. There is no money in the budget to purchase a bed, a sheet, a pot or a sponge. So we work hard to collect used furniture and to use the money we receive from generous donors carefully so that every new family will have cleaning supplies, tooth-

brushes, and all the necessities that have to be bought new. So staff and volunteers moved everything in for this new family, made the beds, and put the dishes away. That evening, we went to the airport to pick them up.

When they got off the plane, they walked through the airport tentatively, almost fearfully, knowing that this was their final destination but having no understanding of what sort of a place it was. When our interpreter spoke to them in Burmese they broke into wide smiles. We collected their ONE suitcase and took them to their apartment. It's the sort of apartment where you pass the bedrooms first. So we showed them each one and I thought to myself that it really was tight. In the first two bedrooms there were two twin beds right up against the walls with only about two feet in between them. In the third, there was a double bed and a crib and a little more space. Then we went into the living room/kitchen area and I asked if they had any questions about their apartment. The father said yes and I waited for the interpreter to tell me what he was asking. He said, "What part of this is for us?"

I didn't get it for a moment. I was so wrapped up in my

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.

assumptions about the apartment being too crowded that I couldn't immediately absorb what he meant. He thought that there was so much extra space that we were going to put other families in there with them. When I figured out his meaning, I told him that it was all for them – the landlord would not be happy if there were more people living there. His immediate response was, "Please tell the landlord that we will take very good care of it."

Driving home that night, to my house where there are often empty bedrooms, I kept thinking, "What part of this is for us?" The next morning when I woke up and looked outside at our property, not an inch of which is being used to grow food, I thought, "What part of this is for us?" The next weekend when I went grocery shopping and was surrounded by more food and packaging than I could comprehend, I thought to myself, "What part of this is for us?" Now if you're wondering if I've decided to sell my house and give up eating until the world becomes an equitable place, I'll end the suspense right now. I haven't. Something I've had to work on learning in order to survive working with the dispossessed of this world is to feel good

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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.

Journey to a New Home

By Ambika Timsina

Translated by Supriya Serchan

Our plane journey was a unique and new experience for us. We really had fun on our journey. Along with my family there were two more families whose flight was on the same date. On March 8th, 2008 we had to take a domestic flight from Bhadrapur, Nepal to Kathmandu, Nepal. During our journey from Bhadrapur to Kathmandu, International Organization for Migration (IOM) staff members helped us to get on the right plane. This was a new experience for me and my family. We had never ridden on a plane before. I was pretty afraid and we all were very nervous. After a few minutes we were seated. The plane took off at its own speed. During our journey to Kathmandu from the plane we also saw a beautiful mountain, the highest in the world, Mt. Everest. We all were so happy and after an hour we came to Kathmandu. After staying in Kathmandu for two days we had to make another journey from Kathmandu to Abu Dhabi. With the help of IOM staff we went into the right plane and got seated.

This plane was much bigger than the domestic plane. We all felt lucky. We never

could have imagined this journey that we were on. During our journey we watched movies and listened to music. We also slept for a second so I felt like I was inside my house. Our journey was long and we were so tired. New faces, a new language, and unique places were all very interesting. After five or six hours we came to Abu Dhabi airport. There were people from all different countries speaking their own languages. The airport was very fun; we had never seen it before. We again took another plane from Abu Dhabi to New York. Even though we were so tired with our long journey, we were very happy with the new and unique experiences we were experiencing throughout our journey.

When we reached New York we were greeted by IOM staff. They helped us get onto the next plane. My family and the other two families got separated because we were resettling in a different state. We felt sad because we had to be separated from each other after our long journey. The next day, my family and I took another plane to our destination: Vermont. We were thinking about where we would go now and where our home would be. We saw snow on the ground. When our plane landed we walked towards the exit. There, we saw Vermont Refugee Resettlement



Program staff waiting for us. We were so glad to see them. They helped us with luggage and took us to our new home. Being a refugee, we had lost our home, happiness and future, but being here in Vermont we feel that we got back everything.

This journey was extremely new and the experience was unique and fun for us. I will never forget this journey.

Volunteer Help Needed!

By Marcia Stone

We are told there will soon be another surge of new arrivals coming to our fine city! In preparation for this "surge" we are trying to get ahead with our donations. As most of you know, we furnish apartments completely through donated goods. We are really in need right now and will be for the rest of the summer.

We could really use everyone's help in asking for donations of beds, kitchen tables, chairs, TV's and many other items as well as picking them up and bringing them to our warehouse. For a complete list of what is needed please contact Deirdre at dsmith@uscrrv.org or call the volunteer office at 338-4633. Donations are tax deductible! Perhaps you would like to be our Craigslist watchdog? Also, people with access to a pickup truck would be an enormous help since we often need to pick up donations and bring them to our warehouse. I know everyone has seen this plea for donations many times but please do pitch in this summer as the need is greater now than ever and will continue.

***Form an Emergency donation committee:** Ideally this would be a group of volunteers who wanted to do this long term or at least be willing to follow up. It's ideal for someone who doesn't have a lot of time but can be flexible for phone calls and coordination. Arrivals are always unpredictable and supplies of furniture in the warehouse can diminish very quickly. We need someone who has the resources to call their friends, church members, and community to quickly get things donated when needed. Right now we really need beds!

***Host Families:** The best start for any new refugee is living with a host family for a couple of weeks before they move into their own apartment. We find the apartment and orchestrate the move – the host offers their home and food for the family for a short time when they first arrive in Vermont. This is a wonderful opportunity to really learn about different cultures and to truly make a difference in someone's life.

***Feeling Crafty?** Or how about just willingness to organize the coming together of some craftsman/women of other cultures? We have a small grant that will provide the means to buy materials needed for their native crafts such as beading and weaving. You don't need to know about the craft just have a willingness to facilitate! This could be a summer project and really would be great to have happen while young women are out of school. (teens and young adults)

***We always need fundraisers/fundraising efforts!** This can be fun and on a small scale. Maybe your kids have a compassion for others that you would like to foster. So how about helping them set up a lemonade stand and then donate the proceeds to VRRP? Maybe you would like to ask your friends and neighbors to pick up household cleaning products at Costco and then make a contribution here for our new families? It doesn't have to be a big, time consuming effort but many small efforts do pay off and are so appreciated.

I would be delighted to talk further with you about any of the above projects. Please contact me either by email, mstone@uscrrv.org or by calling my office number, 338-4627.

Learning Nepali Hospitality

By Leigh Williams

Nepal is a place filled with dichotomies which bring into question most everything we hold dear in the western world. I spent time there in college and again in 2005 when my daughter Camille was three. There is a pervasive spiritual happiness which exists without material. It is a way of being and a way of life I have never experienced anywhere else. People are poor but happy and always optimistic. They need very little and will give away anything they have without expectation. Everywhere I went in Nepal I was provided for with an unconditional hospitality by people, who by western standards, have very little to offer.

Last Monday Camille and I spent the afternoon getting ready to meet the new family. It was an exciting day. As new volunteers with the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program we didn't know what to expect but we were excited to meet new friends. We planted fresh Cilantro and Basil for them and shopped for a Ganesh statue for their new home. With only a few hours to prepare their apartment, we did our best to neaten things up. We carried heavy boxes of food and garbage bags filled with towels and clean linens up the stairs. Camille helped make all the beds and put away the groceries. It was a warm evening and the apartment was stuffy and still.

At 8:30 we met the VRRP Director, Judy Scott and interpreter, Ongyel Sherpa, at the airport. After just minutes, the family stepped into the terminal. The father and mother first, followed by the grandmother. The four year old clung to the mother and eight year old child hid behind the father's leg. It is difficult to guess what they were each feeling but it was clear they were relieved to see us and to know their journey was finished and they could begin again here, in a new home.

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Congratulations Fatuma!

VRRP is proud to welcome it's newest arrival! This summer, staff interpreter Fatuma Bulle had a beautiful baby boy, Ahmed Abdi Ahmed. Fatuma has enjoyed a much needed rest at home with her baby, but will soon return to our office. We look forward to her return and hope for many visits from little Ahmed Abdi.

A Soldier's Perspective

By Philip Corriveau

There have been times throughout Burlington's history in which it has served as a refuge for immigrants coming from distant parts of our crazy, upturned world. Iraq is currently one of these distant locations and we are now beginning to have Iraqis resettled in our community. There is some concern however that these Iraqi refugees may find themselves ill received. Because I spent a year in Iraq and had many experiences, a friend thought that it would be worthwhile for me to share some of them. I was in the Army from 2003-2006, and deployed to southwestern Baghdad in 2005. With the experiences I had there, I have no reservations or fears about sharing our city with Iraqi people. You may wonder if this may be because I had a soft deployment, but southwestern Baghdad was known for being volatile and filled with enemy fighters. All the same, I know that the average southern Baghdad Iraqi was not responsible for this, and I'm writing in the hopes that you, the reader, will be able to share in my experience and my love for Iraqis.

My first story is about one of my favorite Iraqi people; her name is Aiya. She was 5 years old when she first started bringing excitement and humanity into my life. She would seek me out when my patrol stopped in her village once we'd become friends. She claimed me as her GI. Aiya lived in what we called the "squatter huts" because Aiya's family, as well as her whole village, had to live or "squat" on government land because they owned none. They built themselves makeshift homes from buckets of lard filled with mud, plastic, and other crude materials they could get their hands on. One day we had our Humvees outside Aiya's house and I decided to get a picture of myself with some cute Iraqi kids, as there were always an abundance of children around Army patrols. To my left, an adorable little girl stood, in a white dress. I waved her towards myself, showing her my camera so that she would know I wanted a picture. As I crouched to my knee, she came to my side wearing a bashful smile. I held the camera in front of us

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VRRP would love to thank those businesses and organizations who supported World Refugee Day. Your donations and efforts made this event possible!

Thank you to:
 Cloud 9 Catering
 Euro Market
 Brixton Halaal
 Green Mountain Coffee Company
 Hannaford
 Klinger's Bread Company
 Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce
 Pho Dang
 Price Chopper
 Shaw's
 Thai Phat
 NPC
 Ohavi Zedek Synagogue
 Kids on the Block
 Vermont Tent Company
 The Unitarian Universalist Church
 Pemba Sherpa
 Christina Erikson
 Doug Davis and Pat Matton
 Peter Merritt

UVM Offers Free Summer Housing for Refugee Families

By LeeAnn Cox

"We're welcoming our new neighbors," said Susan Comerford, associate dean for academic affairs and research in the College of Education and Social Services, as the university opens vacant summer residences to families from Iraq, Myanmar, and, soon, beyond. UVM already has well-established partnerships with the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP), including a year-long series of staff seminars given by the social work faculty, but this new step presents immediate, direct aid to families whose lives have been upended.

With no housing sources of its own, VRRP relies on the same means of finding affordable living space as other Vermonters. "Because the current rental market is so competitive," said the nonprofit's director Judy Scott in an email, "having short-term housing available to a few newly-arrived families will make it possible for VRRP to find better long-term housing situations for these families. (Our) partnership with UVM demonstrates the university's commitment to being an active contributor to the success of refugees in Vermont."

As Comerford sees it, the relationship is mutually beneficial. "It benefits our faculty and our staff and our student body; it improves the diversity and richness of our campus culture," she said. "There's something more intimate about having a

family in our midst and I think that intimacy helps us to grow and deepen our compassion and also I think for refugee families to have deeper, richer experiences with Americans. It's so difficult for them in their lives because they are so busy trying to survive that oftentimes they don't make American friends and I think those friendships sustain them across time."

In just a week or so that has already proven true. The two refugee families who have moved into the Apartments and Family Housing facility for nontraditional students have joined a community that already included representatives from 25 different countries. According to Sharon Pitterson-Ogaldez, assistant director for this section of residential life, the daughter of an Indian couple, about 8 years old and lacking playmates of her own age, has made fast friends, playing and riding bikes with the girl from Iraq who moved in with her mother last week. The young Iraqi speaks a little English and the girls are said to be "very talkative." She and her mother are waiting and hoping for the older sister to get papers to leave Iraq and join them.

Through translators, the Iraqi mother has expressed profuse thanks to Pitterson-Ogaldez and her staff for such a nice place and the dad from Myanmar, watching the sense of freedom his three children feel, has a face that beams, she says.

POPULATION: Iraq Still a Major Source of Refugees in 2007

By Jim Lobe

WASHINGTON, Jun 19 (IPS) - Despite a marked reduction in violence due in part to more aggressive U.S. counter-insurgency efforts in 2007, Iraq was the biggest source of the world's newest refugees for the third year in a row, according to the latest annual report of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) released here Thursday.

Last year's exodus was absorbed mostly by Syria, which took in some 500,000 Iraqis during the year -- or nearly half of the more than a million people who sought refuge by crossing an international border during 2007. Tens of thousands more Iraqis also found their way to Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Turkey, and even Sweden and Germany, which took in, respectively, 10,000 and 6,700 Iraqis during the year.

The report, "World Refugee Survey 2008", said more than two million Iraqis are currently living outside their homeland, the vast majority in Syria and Jordan.

Somalia -- also caught up in Washington's

"global war on terror" -- ranked second as a source of new refugees during the year, in large part due to renewed fighting there after U.S.-backed Ethiopian troops ousted Islamist forces, who had brought order to much of the chronically unstable East African nation in 2006, from the capital, Mogadishu, and much of the countryside, according to the new report.

While the continuing violence there has reportedly uprooted over one million Somalis, some 45,000 sought refuge in Ethiopia, and thousands more fled to Yemen and Kenya. Most of the people displaced by the violence, however, have remained within the country in what some have described as the world's worst and most neglected humanitarian crisis.

The total number of refugees worldwide rose to 14 million by the end of 2007, the largest number since the U.S. war on terror began in late 2001, but only a modest net increase from the previous year, due in major part to the return of nearly 200,000 Afghans from Iran and Pakistan; tens of

thousands of Congolese from Tanzania and Congo-Brazzaville; and tens of thousands more Burundians from Tanzania, and Sudanese from Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. About 40,000 Liberians also returned home from other West African countries as well.

The net increase echoes the conclusion of the annual report released earlier in the week by the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR), which concluded that the number of refugees in the world climbed from 9.9 million to 11.4 million during 2007. The greater relative size of the increase, compared to USCRI's, was due in part to a change in its own methodology compared to previous years.

Despite the continuing increase in the number of Iraqi refugees, the world's biggest refugee populations by far as of the end of 2007 include Afghans, about three million of whom remain in Pakistan and Iran, and Palestinians, of whom more

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World Refugee Day Picnic: A Focus on Reducing Waste

By Christina Erikson

At this year's picnic, everyone took a moment longer at the trash barrel, or rather, barrels. Instead of sending all of the waste from the picnic straight to the landfill, this year there was the opportunity to recycle cans and bottles and compost food waste and napkins. Paper plates and forks were the only thing in the trash. With a little guidance, everyone was able to scrape their food waste into the compost bin, place their can in the recycling, and put their plate in the trash.



My goal in providing recycling and compost bins was to demonstrate simple waste reduction practices to our new friends, encouraging the environmental ethic found here in Vermont. Many of the children already knew this game of separating items from school, and others gave a knowing glance that food scraps can be turned into valuable food for animals or for the soil.

Waste reduction practices, along with energy conservation measures, are potential topics for volunteers to introduce to their families. Practices such as recycling, composting, replacing light bulbs, or putting plastic up on drafty windows are good habits to learn—for the earth and for the wallet. Also, be on the lookout for sustainability fairs in your community. These fairs often offer giveaways and would make a great field trip with your family!

The Classic Three Rs:
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

REDUCE

Buy in bulk: Large, "family size" containers require less packaging per pound than small, "single serving" packages. In addition to conserving resources, buying in bulk will also generally save you money!

Look for items with little or no packaging: Many items come in a variety of packaging styles. Choose un packaged items and concentrates whenever possible.

Buy pre-owned items: Around Chittenden County there are thrift stores selling pre-owned clothing and household items. Buying used reduces waste and is much more affordable.

REUSE

Buy reusable products: Disposable products generate more waste than reusable products and often cost more in the long run. Look for reusable cameras, razors, and lunch bags, cloth diapers, cloth napkins and towels, rechargeable batteries, and returnable beverage bottles.

Reuse containers: Rinsed out glass and plastic containers make great storage containers for leftovers, etc.

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Thank You to Everyone who Made the Sip A Bowl Benefit Dinner a Success!

Silent Auction Donors

American Flatbread
Burlington Hearth
Apple Mountain
Basin Harbor Club
Ben Franklin Store
Blue Plate Ceramic Café
Bo
Burlington Peace and Justice
Store and Center
Charles L. Scott, II
Charles W. Norris-Brown
Chittenden Bank
Dug Nap
ECHO Lake Aquarium and
Science Center
Flynn Center
Garnet Hall
Gilded Cage
Ginny Callan
Global Pathways Jewelry
Growing Vermont
Hydrangea Too
Jeremy Ayers
Kathryn Budnik
Ken & Jackie Hyman

Kiss the Cook
Lake Champlain Sailing Center
Marie Davis
Megan Humphrey
Roof Top Pottery
Sakura Bana Japanese
Restaurant
Sprout Parenting
Stephan Gerard, Tonic Salon
Sweet Cecily
The Bearded Frog
Vermont Yak Company
Vince and Allyson Bolduc
Whistle Hill Farm

Food Donors

Amy Moody Catering
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Intervale farmers
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Klinger's

Mirabelle's
Nhat Long
NPC Processing, Inc.
Pemba Sherpa
Pho Dang
Pho Hong
Sakura
Samosa Man
Serchan's Ethnic Food
Stone Soup
Thai Phat

Entertainment

Ambika Timsina & friends
Poonam Pradha
Mukiza Noel
Arunima Dasgupta &
friends
Ongyel Sherpa
Remu Timsina
Mark Sustic & friends
Craig Chipman

Organizing Committee

Supriya Serchan
Sumana Serchan

Manisha Khadka
Reiko Takamatsu
Tori Kuehn
Zach Mangione
Maureen Rees
Marcia Stone
Jessica Hyman
Bart Westdijk
Kate Westdijk

Volunteers

Gwen Pokalo
Christina Erikson
Deirdre Smith
Kesha Ram
Bryan Stuart

Handmade bowls donated
by UVM Pottery Co-op &
Burlington City Arts

Cards donated by Hope
for Women

Flowers donated by In Full
Bloom Florists

Learning Nepali Hospitality

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The first few days we walked around a lot and tried to learn the bus system. They were quiet when we went out, observing and learning the way. They learned how to cross the street, watching for traffic lights and walk signals. In Nepal streets are congested with push carts, bicycles, bicycle rickshaws, taxi cabs, motorcycles, motorized rickshaws, small buses, large buses, cars, pedestrians, and cows. Needless to say it is mayhem, but there is an observed pecking order. It is always the cows that have the right of way.



Photo: Lauren Berrizbeitia

Pedestrians are second. In Nepal you can cross the street wherever and whenever you want and expect vehicles to simply swerve around you.

We talked about friends, and family left behind in Nepal and they said they were feeling sad and lonely. They talked about living in the refugee camp, having people around all the time and how difficult it was to suddenly have no one familiar around them. They shared pictures of friends and colleagues taken during a ceremony in honor of the father leaving his teaching position at a school of 400 students. In Nepali the closest translation for the verb "to miss" is "to remember". The only way to say "I miss you" is to say "I remember you fondly"; a wonderful example of the perpetually optimistic Nepali spirit.

During their first week in America the family has met other Bhutanese refugees from Nepal and are slowly learning new ways of living. Today the mother gave me a gift of two bangels. She put them on my wrist and we admired them together. This

is the hospitality and the generosity that makes me question everything. How can they be so generous when they seemingly have so little to give? Or perhaps it is in fact that they have so much to give and to teach about how to be in the world.

I brought the parents to the Indian Grocery store, Chittenden Bank, and Grand Union in the middle of a thunder storm. They wanted yogurt. "In America are there open markets?" they asked, still waiting to see something that isn't here. When we returned to the apartment they put on a pot for chia, the traditional Nepali milk tea which is customary to serve to guests and visitors. This was the first time I was served chia in their home and it was a very special moment for them and for me. Chia is a matter of pride in Nepali culture, and it was a great honor. This was the true beginning for them and it was magical to be a small part of it. I was once again amazed that people with so little can be so rich and can create such deep happiness from nearly nothing.

A Soldier's Perspective

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and she spun herself around, stood next to me, and let me put an arm around her for the picture. After the camera had snapped, to my surprise, Aiya turned and in very clear English asked me "what's your name?" I could tell by her smile that she felt special because I had chosen to take a picture of myself with her and we were friends immediately. I began to look for her when my patrol visited her village but despite keeping an eye open for Aiya, I didn't see her for weeks after the first time I met her and eventually I gave up on seeing her again. One day, while at her village a crowd of Iraqi children built up outside my vehicle. They usually assumed that American soldiers had candy and they would gather around and wait. I ignored them because I had none. Ten or fifteen minutes passed when I looked out my window to see Aiya standing 10 or so feet away behind some other children, too shy to look at me directly. She looked down at her feet sheepishly. I opened my door, called to her and signaled her to myself. She looked up, smiled, and came running. She was a great friend to have in a combat zone as she had the ability to remove me from a drone deployment mentality, when the only people I interacted with were soldiers.

Another young treasure that I met was a boy, probably around 11, whose name I never learned. He made his introduction in a crowd of obnoxious boys who would point to every piece of gear on my vest three separate times to ask me "what's this?" He silenced and dispersed them in Arabic and then spent five minutes teaching me different words to use to send people away. He told me his name, he told me about his father, and then began to tell me how much he loved America, how he loved "Bush", and American soldiers. He seemed to be trying so hard to convince me to like him. I can vividly remember how he stopped, and how a brand new look washed across his face when in response to his saying "I love America," I said, "I love Iraq." I remember how he seemed so surprised and so appreciative. He stopped with his comments and his expression changed. I was amazed to see such maturity in such a young boy and how much he loved his country; I think more than many Americans love their own.



Lastly, they say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Here I have a picture of a poor man, also a "squatter" whose son was helped by surgeons located through U.S. Army networks. His son was born with his intestines outside of his abdomen. I'm offering this picture hoping that you will see this father's face and empathize with the look in his eyes, and his hopes for his son. Perhaps you can empathize with him, perhaps you can empathize with other Iraqis as well; those that come to our city in search of a better life. I hope that you can see, as I saw, that they are not all that different from you and me.

WRD: Reducing Waste*Continued from page 5*

Reuse bags: Whether cloth, plastic, or paper, reuse grocery bags when you shop.

RECYCLE

Recycling in Chittenden County is FREE! Place items in a blue recycling box or a cardboard box and place it on the curbside the night before pick-up. You have to pay for trash removal, so by separating recyclables, you can save money and send less waste to the landfill.

Items to recycle include: plastic bottles and containers, glass bottles and jars, paper, and cardboard.

REDUCE your monthly electric bill by following these tips:

Turn off the lights and other appliances when not using them

In the summer, keep blinds or curtains shut to keep the heat out

In winter, keep thermostat at 68°F during the day, at 58°F at night. Wear a sweater instead of turning on the heat. If too hot, adjust the thermostat instead of opening the windows.

You can buy compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) which are more efficient and last 10 times longer than regular light bulbs. Look for the rebate coupons from Efficiency Vermont to save money.

Dry your clothes outside on a line (free!) instead of paying for a dryer or using more electricity.

RESOURCES:

Chittenden Solid Waste District (for bins and what can be recycled or composted)
(802) 872-8111
www.cswd.net

Burlington Electric Department (energy saving tips)
(802) 658-0300
<http://www.burlingtonelectric.com/EnergyEfficiency/tips.htm>



Photo: Lauren Berrizbeitia

CVOEO (weatherization service for low-income families)
(802) 482-4180
http://www.cvoeo.org/html/Weatherization/weatherization_home.html

Perhaps for next year's picnic we can aim for zero waste, either using compostable plates or asking everyone to bring a plate and fork along with them. Special thanks go to Chittenden Solid Waste District for loaning us the recycling and compost bins and to the UVM Recycling Office for donating biodegradable bags.

Population*Continued from page 4*

than two million live in the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon; about one million more in Jordan and Syria; and yet another half a million in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, North Africa, and even Iraq, where, despite persecution by Shi'a militias since the U.S. invasion in 2003, there remain about 14,000 Palestinians today out of the 85,000 living there before the occupation.

Most of these are considered "warehoused" refugee populations, living in large camps or segregated settlements of at least 10,000 people for more than five years -- and in some cases, decades. The Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon have been there since 1949, and those in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait since 1968. The 2.7 million Afghans in Iran and Pakistan date back to 1980.

Other large "warehoused" groups include Somalis (418,400 in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen since 1992) and Sudanese (300,700 in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt since 1984).

The USCRI report rates the Palestinians' plight in Iraq as among the 10 worst places in the world for the treatment of refugees. Other "worst places" for refugees include Bangladesh, particularly the situation of Rohingya refugees from Burma; China, especially its forcible repatriation of North Korean refugees; India and its treatment of Tibetans and Burmese; Kenya, Malaysia, Russia, Sudan, Thailand.

Europe was also included among "the worst" in the report for its increasingly restrictive policies directed against refugees and asylum seekers.

Aside from the West Bank and Gaza, the latest report found that Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are currently the countries that host the largest refugee populations relative to their size of their indigenous population. For every nine Jordanian citizens, for example, there is one refugee; for Syria, the ratio is 1:11; for Lebanon, 1:12.

Some of the world's poorest countries also host a high relative number of refugees. Chad, one of the world's five poorest nations, hosts nearly 300,000 refugees, or a ratio of 1:37. Similarly, Tanzania, despite

the recent repatriations, hosts over 400,000 refugees, or a refugee of 1:89.

The Middle East and North Africa lead the world in hosting refugee populations, with a total of 6,380,200, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (2,799,500), East Asia and the Pacific (934,700), Americas and the Caribbean (787,800) and Europe (527,900).

Overall, nations with a per capita GDP of less than 2,000 dollars hosted almost two-thirds of all refugees.

"The mistreatment of refugees is not limited to poor countries or undemocratic regimes," the report notes. "Wealthy industrial nations utilize policies designed to limit the number of refugees that enter their territory, explaining that they have limited resources, that refugees are unable to integrate or that some other country had primary responsibility."

The report gave Europe a grade of "D" and the United States a grade of "F" for their practice of "refoulement", or returning refugees to places where their lives or freedoms could be threatened.

Out of a Crack

Continued from page 1

about what I do AND, more importantly, to not feel bad about what I don't do. But that doesn't answer the question: "What part of this is for us?"

Last week a Sudanese client who's been here about two and a half years came into our office to tell me that life has gotten very bad in his hometown again. The government is supposed to have a peace treaty with southern Sudan but his hometown, Abiey, has oil reserves under it. He told me that the soldiers had returned, shooting people, and everyone had to run away into the forest. He'd been saving money to return to Sudan and visit his mother but now she'd had to run away again. He said that she's smart and can find cassava leaves to eat but he's worried because she only has the dress she was wearing. He wanted my help in figuring out how to send clothes to her and to their neighbors. He said we have so many clothes in this country – we could share them. He asked if I could help him talk to the UN or to our office in Washington so we could send clothes there.

I have no idea how to help with this. I have clothes I could send but I have no idea how to get them to the forest outside of Abiey in southern Sudan. What part of this responsibility is for us?

We have clients arriving now who are originally from Iraq. Our government accepts

them for resettlement because their lives are in danger even in the countries to which they've fled: Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey. They are either members of religious minorities or people who were marked for punishment or death because they had aided U.S. troops. When they're accepted for resettlement it's the luck of the draw what country they're sent to. We have new Vermonters who have a sister in Holland, parents in Australia and a brother in Canada. These are people who grew up with a family closeness so strong that it's hard for us to fathom. What part of this responsibility is for us?

My answer is to do what we can do, inadequate though it may be. We can't fix what's happened to those families but we can show newcomers how to go to the library so they can use the internet to be in daily contact with their families. Maybe we can't send clothes to Sudan but we can help the new Sudanese family who just arrived last week, our first family from western Sudan, the Darfur region, to find jobs and to learn English. We can give them the tools to build new lives.

Charlie Burchard Memorial Trust

VRRP's English Language Training department thanks the Charlie Burchard Memorial Trust for its support of the In-Home Tutor Program, a program designed to reach those refugees who do not have access to the regularly scheduled English classes available in Burlington, due to conflicts with childcare, work schedules or transportation. The In-Home Tutor Program currently sends over 72 English tutors into clients' homes in mostly Burlington and Winooski for one-on-one English intensive lessons. In addition, pairing refugee clients with volunteer tutors better connects these new families to the community, helping them to establish relationships that ultimately aid in building language skills and the self-confidence needed to survive in this new country. Tutors have recently been operating with largely insufficient resources, but with new funds from the Charlie Burchard Memorial Trust grant, VRRP will be able to purchase Picture Dictionaries for tutors to use with their students. Picture Dictionaries are a great resource because they address a wide range of relevant topics through pictures, and are easily navigable by people with wide-ranging literacy levels. They will greatly enhancing the quality of the home learning program. Thank you Charlie Burchard Memorial Trust for your generous support!

That's what helping refugees is all about: an opportunity to give those tools. What part of this opportunity is for us? We all have our own very personal, very caring, very ardent answers to that question. Thanks for doing your part.

Congratulations!

VRRP would like to congratulate Htun Sein, Matt Thompson and Supriya Serchan on their new positions with our organization. Htun Sein, Matt and Supriya have each shown an enormous amount of dedication to VRRP and the people we serve and have been hard at work learning their new jobs. Htun Sein is working as a full-time Burmese interpreter, while Matt has taken on the new role of Coordinator of Programs. Supriya is our newest Case Manager. We welcome everyone to our staff and wish them the best of luck!

VRRP STAFF PHONE DIRECTORY

Deirdre Smith	AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer Office	802-338-4632
Emily Cochrane	AmeriCorps*VISTA ELT Office	802-655-2656
Fatuma Bulle	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1706
Htun Sein	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1728
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Rashid Hussein	Senior Case Manager	802-654-1707
Supriya Serchan	Case Manager	802-338-4618
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@uscrvt.org (Exception: Volunteer Office = volunteer@uscrvt.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 Marcia at 338-4627 or mstone@uscrvt.org.
Articles for our September newsletter are due August 22nd.

Yard Sale Watch!

It is once again that time of year. Neighbors everywhere seem to be discarding old furniture and household items.

VRRP wants those items that are still in good condition so that we can furnish apartments as new families arrive!

Please be our ears and eyes as you travel in your area. VRRP can give a tax receipt for items donated to our organization.

For a list of acceptable donations or to donate an item, please contact Deirdre Smith at dsmith@uscrvt.org or 338-4632

Volunteer Orientation

Volunteer Orientations provide a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our organization, our volunteer program, and volunteer opportunities. Marcia and Deirdre 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.

In August, orientations are being held every Thursday from 11:30 - 1:00. If evening meeting times are better for you, then you're welcome to come to one of our September orientations, which will be held every Thursday from 5:30 - 7:00.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Thank You!

For the month of July, Hannaford Supermarket on Dorset St. in South Burlington selected VRRP as the donation recipient for any bottle returns that were donated for charity!

All of the money that VRRP received from this wonderful project will be used to purchase items for the Welcome Kit that each family receives including: soap, shampoo, toilet paper, trash bags, light bulbs and other necessary household items.

Thank you to Hannaford and VRRP volunteer, Denise Richards, for organizing this wonderful collaboration!

September Volunteer Training

Fuel Assistance & Section 8 Application Training

6:00-7:00 Tuesday, September 9th

This training is especially important for volunteers working with newly arrived families. The Fuel Assistance application will ensure that they receive a benefit for winter heating costs. The waiting list for Section 8 Housing can be very long, so getting an application in as soon as possible is best for the family.

Please contact Deirdre (dsmith@uscrvt.org or 338-4632) if you plan to join us for a training.

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.)