

A Crack in the Rock

VRRP's Volunteer Newsletter

June 2007
vol. 3, no. 4



VRRP is a local program of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Inside This Issue

Out of a Crack By Judy Scott	1
In the depth of winter By Rio Holaday	2
Bike Recycle Vermont By Wilson Skinner	2
World Refugee Day!	3
Volunteer with VRRP and Craftproducers By Jenny Cianciola	3
My Role as a Volunteer By Jessie Davis	4
Small World or Fate? By Kate Donnelly	5
Turkish Fast Food: Layered Kowurma By Kate Donnelly	5
ESL Tutor Corner	5
Volunteering Produces Health Benefits	6
Thank You!	6
Community Buzz!	9

VRRP's Mission Statement

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.



Photo: Rose McNulty

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 215 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

We have never before been in position to print breaking news in *A Crack in the Rock* but, as we all know, life in refugee resettlement is always an adventure. We've got news for you today!

A group of refugees new to Vermont will begin to arrive June 5th. They are called the 1972 Burundians because that was the year that civil war forced them to flee from Burundi to a refugee camp in Tanzania. For the last 35 years they have existed in this camp. (For more information, see page 2.) To me, it is unimaginable to think of people, the majority of whom have never known any life but the human warehouse of a refugee camp. We now have the rare opportunity to open our lives, our hearts and minds, to welcome and ease the adjustment of these newcomers. As they leave the afflictions of camp life behind, they will take on the struggles of resettling in a strange place. We have the privilege to offer them the tools to create new lives.

Thinking of this takes me back almost four years when my husband and I, as volunteers, hosted one of the first Somali

Bantu families to arrive in Vermont. Having spent the previous 13 years in a refugee camp, they were unfamiliar with modern life. Knowing their background, we were anxious about the whole experience of hosting. But our first thrill came early on when we handed the phone to the mother of this family. She is a strong, grounded person whose energy and impressive intelligence is devoted to the well-being of her family. Her determination, along with her husband's, had carried their four small children through the rigors of refugee camp survival to arrive at our door eager for a new life.

But a telephone! She'd never touched a telephone before. As I held the receiver out to her, a look of wonder spread across her face, as if she was thinking, "Me! Who ever thought I'd touch a telephone? What do I do?" As I offered it to her, I realized how crazy my expectations were: if you've never used a telephone, how can you know what to do with it? But she, always ready for the next challenge, took the phone from me and cradled it in her hand, near her ear, as I'd been doing, and waited for it to

do something. I felt so inept – we had no common language and I had no way to tell her to say hello so that her case manager on the other end would speak back to her. But of course, after an awkward moment, I figured something out. Maybe it wasn't smooth, maybe it wasn't clever, but I got close enough to her and spoke loudly enough so the case manager at the other end could hear me: "Say something – she's on the line!"

As their conversation flowed in a mix of sounds incomprehensible to me, I realized that the telephone is far more complicated than I'd ever grasped. But even with my new-found respect for its complexities, I was aware that figuring out how to use a phone is nothing compared to working out how to bring your family through year after year of refugee camp life where inadequate food and water weaken people and curable diseases kill them.

When my husband and I, with quite a bit more trepidation than turned out to be necessary, volunteered to host a family, we had no idea how rewarding it would be to intro-

Continued on page 8

In the depth of winter

By Rio Holaday

To us Vermonters, winter is many things: crackling fires, icicles on rooftops, tongues stuck on mailboxes. To Sebastien Hakizimana, who arrived from Burundi as a refugee in 2004, winter was just one thing: depressing. Though relieved to be safe, the cold was unforgiving. Sebastien had expected winter — after all, he had seen snow in movies and had images in his head of a wintry New York City. But coming from a place where 70 degrees defined “cold,” there was no way that Sebastien could have sufficiently prepared himself. In other words, the nature of the situation made it impossible for an intelligent man like Sebastien to be ready for what awaited him, and possible for one of the warmest people I know to become depressed.

Sebastien was also overwhelmed by the strangeness of life in America: “Everything I knew disappeared when I arrived here,” he told me. Sebastien had studied English in school, but nothing he had learned helped. Vocabulary, accent,

the American way and speed of speaking — they were all different. Figuring out grocery store prices, public transportation, what people on TV were saying — it was impossible to relax amidst the confusion. And time management was impossible: Sebastien worried about paying his bills on time, because he worked when the post office was open; it wasn’t until much later that he discovered the rarely discussed secret of leaving stamped mail in your mailbox. Furthermore, Sebastien was discouraged to know that employers and friends would only see him as his limited language skills let him appear.

When I think of Sebastien’s story, and the stories of other former refugees, I am reminded of a quote by Albert Camus: “In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.” Sebastien and others have not only faced the literal depth of a Vermont winter, but also, I imagine, one of the bleakest periods of their lives. But to succeed as they have requires a strength of spirit that can only come from within. Sebastien believed that if he worked hard and learned quickly, he would one day adapt to his new environment and

be able to communicate on his terms. Today, he has his own business, is training to be an interpreter, and is a former VRRP employee. More importantly, he tells me that when it snows and he doesn’t have much to do, he relaxes at home and watches it fall outside. “I’m really becoming someone else,” he muses.

Starting June 5, VRRP will begin resettling a new group of Burundian refugees known as the 1972 Burundians. While the 1972 Burundians will hardly be arriving in the depth of winter, they will face a struggle more profound than any of us can imagine.

The 1972 Burundians are primarily a group of Hutu refugees who fled the Tutsi-led genocide between May and August 1972. Since then, it has never been safe for them to return and, having lost their homes and property, they have never had anything to return to. While we do not know everyone’s story, we expect that the newcomers have lived as refugees for 35 years, either in neighboring countries like Rwanda, or in Tanzanian refugee camps. Just over 50 percent of the group to be resettled is

Continued on page 7

Bike Recycle Vermont

By Wilson Skinner

Bike Recycle Vermont began in July 2004 to provide bicycles for Somali Bantu families sponsored by the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program. Within a few months the project collected over 200 bikes, repairing and delivering dozens of them to participants at no cost.

After operating out of volunteers’ backyards for a couple of months, it became clear that our project would be more effective if we developed an organizational structure and built a bike repair shop. In January 2005, BRV became a self-supporting project of Local Motion and entered into a rental agreement with the Good News Garage. The Good News Garage is a non-profit that provides donated automobiles to low-income Vermonters at the cost of any required repairs. In a little over two years BRV has repaired and distributed over 1000 bikes to low-income families and individuals, many of whom are recently arrived refugees.

Along with distributing bikes, one of the major project goals is providing job skills and bike repair training to adults and children with limited means. In that capacity BRV has worked with numerous high schools, middle schools, and alternative and transitional programs.

Bike Recycle Vermont still operates close to the bone with only one full-time employee, Program Director Mark Rowell, and AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer, Wilson Skinner.

BRV has stayed close to its original philosophy by maintaining a strong volunteer team.

We were very fortunate last summer to have found one of our most helpful volunteers. Mohamud Hassan came to our shop looking for a way to get to school



Photo: Wilson Skinner

and around town. After receiving his bike he began to bring in his friends and family. He soon became our unofficial interpreter of Somali and MaayMaay. We stretched his services by asking him to call the parents of certain children and ask about their children’s bikes. One of

Continued on page 4

Join us for
World Refugee Day!

Celebrating the United States' proud tradition of welcoming refugees and the cultures and traditions they bring to towns and cities across America.

*Saturday, June 23 from 11:00 - 4:00 at Oakledge Park

*Bring a dish to share and a blanket to sit on

*Enjoy drumming, dancing, and other forms of merry-making!

Volunteer with VRRP and Craftproducers

By Jenny Cianciola

Jenny Cianciola of Craftproducers has invited VRRP to put up an outdoor tent at any or all of their Art & Craft Festivals this summer for the purpose of spreading awareness and soliciting donations. VRRP is seeking volunteers interested in spearheading this prospective fundraiser and opportunity for publicity, as well as people who are able to participate on the days of the show. Read on to learn more about this generous opportunity!

Craftproducers, a local organization, promotes four annual Art & Craft Festivals in Vermont — two in Stowe and two in Manchester. The festivals attract from 6,000 to 10,000 patrons over a three-day weekend. In addition to approximately 185 art and craft exhibitors, they offer great food and live entertainment — all under large white Camelot-style tents. Festival hours, rain or shine, are 10-5 daily. The Stowe shows this year are July 27-29 and October 5-7. Manchester shows this year are August 3-5 and September 28-30.

There are several ways that VRRP can

participate at the festivals. First, volunteers could staff the VRRP tent, handing out information, talking with interested shoppers, and receiving donations. Second, VRRP clients could be on-site to share information about their culture and homeland via dancing, story telling, etc. Third, there could be a raffle at VRRP's tent for an item such as a car, which would be donated by a supporting business. The drawing could be done on Sunday afternoon from the stage. All money collected would go to VRRP, and the only expense would be the cost of a 10x10 tent (about \$125 new or \$85 to rent).

A final option, available only to VRRP clients, includes participation in Craftproducers' "Sponsored Artist" program. This year, Craftproducers is sponsoring up to four new artists for each show. Several are seniors from UVM. The purpose is to give young artists an opportunity to do some shows for free and to be mentored by the organization and the other exhibitors so that they might get a start making their living doing shows like Craftproducers'. If there are clients who are bona fide artists or craftspeople, they might be eligible to participate in this role. Their work would need to be "juried" by

Craftproducers' staff in advance, just like all the other participating artists in the show. And Craftproducers would need to ensure that space in their medium is still available (for example, only a certain number of jewelers or photographers in each show are accepted). Sponsored exhibitors would likely be placed under the large tents, alongside the other exhibitors at the show. Or, they might be placed beside the VRRP information tent.

Note that the only restriction is that Craftproducers will only allow art and craft that is made and sold by a sponsored exhibitor, and the artist or craftsperson who made the work must be present to sell it. This means that work created by people still living in other countries is not allowed.

Both Jenny Cianciola and Judy Scott are eager to hear from volunteers so that VRRP can have a presence at Craftproducers events this summer. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Judy at 338-4627 or jscott@uscrvt.org. You can also contact Jenny to find out more information at 425-3399 (work), 425-2694 (home), or jenny@craftproducers.com. Visit the website at www.craftproducers.com.

My Role as a Volunteer

By Jessie Davis

As a relatively new volunteer, I constantly wonder what my role is and what I should and should not be doing. Can I walk into their bedrooms? Would it be rude if I wipe down their kitchen counters? Should I organize their paperwork for them? (Which I did once, stuffing bills and notices into folders for each service, even cutting out and pasting the appropriate logo on each folder so the mother in the family, who cannot read yet, could recognize them. Despite my good intentions, the system has slowly fallen into disorder.) After stopping by one bitterly cold day this winter and calling in their landlord to fix the heater, I was thanked with my first meal. After eating, one thing led to another and somehow I ended up being dressed in the *hijab*, which caused laughter all around. When I complimented the beautiful Somali fabric, I should have known they would offer it to me. Though I secretly would have loved to take it, I knew the mother would get much more use out of it than I would. I thanked them profusely and, explaining as best I could my reasoning, I declined. Was this a major cultural gaffe?

My uncertainty about what to do is further fueled by the fact that I have taken on tutoring the mother in my family, a woman 30 years my senior. Solely through the circumstance of me being American and speaking English, I am in the (awkward for me) position of an authority of sorts. Here I am in the supermarket counseling on which tomatoes or brand of bread to buy. I go

through their bills telling them which ones need to be paid first, which ones can wait a week or two. I have accompanied the mother to a few doctor's appointments, and when the doctors ask me who I am, I have to pause and think of an appropriate answer. I am her volunteer, her tutor, her friend? Am I here to be an advocate or just a friendly face?

Of course my answer is to be both, but to be aware that there is a fine line between what I should and should not do. To equal things out when tutoring, I laugh as much as possible. I attempt to speak MaayMaay, saying "so dhawaada" with our "good-bye" (which I remember because it sounds like "soda water") and learning the names of different foods and random words. I smile at every attempt, encouraging her with, "that's very close, almost!" as she writes out the letters, unsure if she understands my exhortations. Likewise, when she explains things to me in MaayMaay, I nod in agreement, having little clue as to what she is telling me but wanting to communicate with her nonetheless.

Though I occasionally want to tell the family how to manage their money, most recently by discouraging them against installing cable to get the FIFA Soccer channel, I bite my tongue. I called up cable providers, found out the options and costs, and let them decide. Because as uncertain of my exact role as I am, I am sure my presence is even more con-

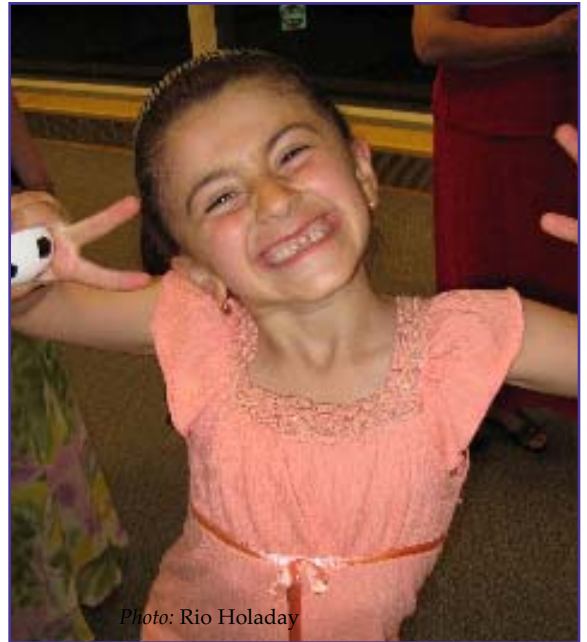


Photo: Rio Holaday

fusing for my family. What must they think of me and why I am here? Do they want me here? These are questions I think many volunteers have asked themselves. One thing I have discovered is that I am not here to make their decisions for them. I am not here to answer every question or fix every problem. My resolve is to be happy with the things I can do for my family, but to not expect to change their situation overnight. To be there when I am asked, but to also recognize and appreciate the wonderful Somali Bantu community of support that exists. To show myself as an equal, not as an authority. As Pema Chodron wrote, "True compassion does not come from wanting to help out those less fortunate than ourselves but from realizing our kinship with all beings." To me, this has become my most important role as a volunteer, to build kinship with other people, to make a connection and welcome them.

Bike Recycle Vermont

Continued from page 2

my favorite memories of Mohamud is the day when he helped select bikes for five children, interpreted our rules for them, and then escorted them home with the VRRP volunteer.

Mohamud has gained the trust of the BRV staff and become a highly valued volunteer. Outside of his own efforts, Mohamud also brought us Abdullahi Ibrahim. When Abdullahi first came to

BRV he was very shy and rarely spoke or left Mohamud's side. However, over time he began to come on his own, and it has been wonderful to see him become more at ease in the shop, to the point where he now knows the other volunteers and has become quite a good mechanic.

I particularly enjoy both boys' company, as they always bring with them a smile and positive attitudes. At several recent volunteer appreciation parties, the *sampusas* (very similar to a *samosa*) that

Mohamud has made were universally proclaimed to be the best dish present.

We are very appreciative of the hard work and enthusiasm of Mohamud Hassan and Abdullahi Ibrahim. Mohamud will be moving at the beginning of the summer and we want to wish him the best of luck and hope he will visit us whenever he is in Burlington.

If you are interested in volunteering or have other questions, please feel free to contact us at info@bikerecycle.localmotion.org or by calling 802-264-9687.

Small World or Fate?

By Kate Donnelly

About ten years ago, my husband and I volunteered with the Peace Corps in Uzbekistan. We taught English to high school students and also English teachers. Since then, we have had a few “it’s a small world after all” encounters with people from Uzbekistan and Uzbek culture. About five years ago, in our Asian and Latino neighborhood in Chicago, I saw a gaggle of giggly girls rush out of a Buddhist temple wearing what looked like Uzbek ethnic dress. Shocked, I asked around and discovered that the local gym teacher at the school across the street was teaching an after-school club about the dances of Uzbekistan and other Turkic people. Definitely an odd coincidence!

Nevertheless, I was more surprised when the same kind of thing continued in Barre. Men in tall Russian-style fur hats walked by my house. A young man spoke on his cell phone in another language, and even

though I couldn’t figure out what the language was, I could understand some of it. At the skating rink, did that girl say she fell down on her butt? How did I know that if she wasn’t speaking English? And who is the woman with the brown, thick shawl and headscarf who seems to live on my street? How could this be happening here?

As an English as a Second Language teacher in Chicago, I had thought moving to small town Barre would mean putting my career on hold. Instead I have found myself in the thick of a resettlement of people who used to live where I used to live. It feels less like coincidence and more like fate every day – here I am, in Barre (of all places!), teaching the Meskhetian Turks, who spent the last 16 years in Russia, but before that, most grew up in Uzbekistan (of all places!).

After ten years away from the Peace Corps, I am depending on that knowledge again. My Turkish students are not Uzbeks, but we have a common knowledge base which can help us communi-

cate. I can see their past vividly, rather than just imagine it. When a student tells me she was raised in Jalalquduk, I’ve heard of it, I’ve been there. When another student tells me that he was a truck driver, I know what kind of truck he drove; it was a *kamaz*, the only kind! For some of my multilingual students, Uzbek is a familiar and even a well-loved language, and they are delighted we can communicate that way. Because Uzbek and Turkish are related languages, I occasionally understand when they are chit-chatting in Turkish during class. Yes, I did hear them right, they were talking about *turnips*!

I have been teaching English classes for VRRP in Waterbury and Barre for a few months now. Though I have taught ESL for many years, it’s been a long time since I’ve taught refugees. I am also discovering this Turkish community here in Washington County and learning about the tragic history and determined perseverance of their people. I hope to share some of my experiences about working and learning with the Turks in future newsletters.

Turkish Fast Food: Layered *Kowurma*

By Kate Donnelly

When the Meskhetian Turks were living in Russia, they grew their own food in large gardens and had domestic animals including cows, chickens, and sheep. Even now in Vermont, my students continue making many of the staples that Americans routinely buy, such as bread and yoghurt.

“Slow food” is a movement that I know Meskhetian Turkish cooks would agree with. They do like pizza or hamburgers when they’re out, but at home, Turkish food is a labor of love that requires time and concentration. Despite what they say, Turkish hand-rolled dumplings, meat pies, rice pilaf, and soups can’t be whipped up in five minutes. Nevertheless, I was curious: what does a Turkish cook make if dinner is late and nothing is already prepared? Dilbar and Shakhshanam Ilyasova, sisters-in-law who live in Waterbury, thought for a while and then said “*kowurma*,” which means “fried up.”

Dilbar provided the recipe and Shakhshanam offered guidance and jokes (in parentheses). This cooking method reminds me of a layer cake, and once assembled in the pan, it requires minimal attention. The result is a luscious sauce that would be delicious with fresh bread or pasta like linguine.

Quarter four small tomatoes, then julienne two small onions, a medium pepper (color no problem!), and a small eggplant. Sprinkle some salt on the cut vegetables. Put two tablespoons of oil in a large skillet. Next, put the vegetables in the pan in layers: first tomatoes, then onions, peppers, and finally eggplant. Sprinkle more salt to taste. Add some chopped fresh herb like dill, but reserve some for a garnish. Now, cover securely with a lid. Cook on medium heat. Check after ten minutes. It should be simmering, not burning. After ten more minutes, pierce vegetables with a fork. If they’re done, take the pan off the heat. (After 20 minutes, your husband will come in! Send him away.) Now, the dish must rest for at least 15 minutes while the juices combine. Toss, garnish, and serve warm. Enjoy!

Though it’s not as fast as a peanut butter and jelly, it’s still pretty quick!

ESL Tutor Corner

Newcomers to the United States are generally familiar with the metric system. If you have traveled, you may have been frustrated when converting travel times from miles to kilometers, understanding quantities in kilograms, or even figuring out what to wear based on a weather forecast using Celcius. This is the same situation faced by our students. Even those who have lived in the United States for a while may still be uncertain about American ways of measuring, such as the Fahrenheit system of temperature, or miles, pounds, feet, gallons, and inches. Tutors might find this a useful topic. Have a look at the weather forecast and talk about what 30 degrees feels like in America, or go through the grocery store and point out where the quantities are written. See if your student knows his/her height and weight in pounds and feet. If your student steps on the scale, be sure you do, too!

Volunteering Produces Health Benefits: New Report Shows Helping Others Improves Your Wellbeing and Longevity

Washington, D.C. – Volunteers help themselves to better health while helping others, according to a study released by the Corporation for National and Community Service that reviews a compelling collection of recent scientific research.

The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research has found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. The report shows that volunteers have greater longevity, higher functional ability, lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease. The report is available in the Research and Policy section of the Corporation's website at http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/performance_research.asp#HBR.

"Volunteering makes the heart grow stronger," said David Eisner, CEO of the Corporation. "More than 61 million Americans volunteer to improve conditions for people in need and to unselfishly give of themselves. While

the motivation is altruistic, it is gratifying to learn that their efforts are returning considerable health benefits."

The Health Benefits of Volunteering documents major findings from more than 30 rigorous and longitudinal studies that reviewed the relationship between health and volunteering, with particular emphasis on studies that seek to determine the causal connection between the two factors. The studies, which were controlled for other factors, found that volunteering leads to improved physical and mental health.

"I commend the Corporation for National and Community Service for its timely focus on health and volunteerism. These findings complement the Administration on Aging's ongoing efforts to harness the power of prevention and wellness for all older Americans. Volunteerism is an important tool in our strategy to promote health and prevent disease," said Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Research suggests that volunteering is particularly beneficial to the health of older adults and those serving 100 hours annually. According to the report:

- A study of adults age 65 and older found that the positive effect of volunteering on physical and mental health is due to the personal sense of accomplish-

ment an individual gains from his or her volunteer activities.

- Another study found that volunteering led to lower rates of depression in individuals 65 and older.

- A Duke study found that individuals who volunteered after experiencing heart attacks reported reductions in despair and depression – two factors that have been linked to mortality in post-coronary artery disease patients.

- An analysis of longitudinal data found that individuals over 70 who volunteered approximately 100 hours had less of a decline in self-reported health and functioning levels, experienced lower levels of depression, and had more longevity.

- Two studies found that volunteering threshold is about 100 hours per year, or about two hours a week. Individuals who reached the threshold enjoyed significant health benefits, although there were not additional benefits beyond the 100-hour mark.

"This is good news for people who volunteer," said Robert Grimm, Director of the Corporation's Office of Research and Policy Development and Senior Counselor to the CEO. "This research is particularly relevant to Baby Boomers, who are receiving as well as giving when they help others. Just two hours of volunteering a week can bring meaning-

Continued on page 7



THANK YOU!

Several months ago, longtime volunteer Pam Johnson, her daughter Cara, friend Pam Nuovo, and daughter Camilla organized a fundraiser to benefit VRRP. The four hosted a home-shopping party and served refreshments while the girls modeled Silpada Designs jewelry that guests could buy. Cara's friend, June Morin, is an independent representative of Silpada and helped the team put the plan into action. Usually, the hostess of a Silpada party receives up to 30 percent of the proceeds in free jewelry. In this case, the four asked to receive their \$210 commission in monetary form. Last month, they presented it to VRRP. Thank you very much to Pam and Cara Johnson, and Pam and Camilla Nuovo for your dedication and generosity!

In the depth of winter

Continued from page 2

under 18, meaning that families are young and the vast majority has grown up or was born in camps or settlement areas. Everyone who arrives will speak Kirundi, the native language of Burundi. Some may speak French, Swahili, or Kinyarwanda. The great majority of the newcomers are Christian, and religion has been central to organized life in the camps.

In preparing for the newcomers, it is important to learn from Sebastien's experience: even the most informed can be overwhelmed and deeply affected by their new lives here. Unlike the more recent arrivals of Somali and Somali Bantu, the 1972 Burundians do not have the luxury before they arrive of hearing just how different things are from previously resettled friends and relatives. While the small Burundian community here is eager to welcome the new group, the newcomers will not have the benefit of an established community to teach them about life here. Learning how to use modern amenities, understanding our time-centric society, learning English, adjusting to our climate, doing everything an entirely new way — these will all be challenges. Yet despite these inevitable hardships, I believe in the newcomers' invincible summers, and Sebastien knows that the safety, choices, opportunities, rights, and good-hearted people in Vermont will far outweigh the inevitable hardships, and former refugees will feel like human beings again.

At VRRP we are preparing for the new arrivals, and we need your help. **Host families** are invaluable for the 1972 Burundians. If every new family can spend about two weeks in a friendly American home and learn about refrigeration, faucets, stove burners, locks, and light switches through hands-on demonstration, then each family will be safer and more prepared to move into their own apartment. **Family friends** are priceless: taking newcomers to a "Western market" for the first time, teaching someone to pay for electricity by check, or accompanying a family to a needle-filled doctor's appointment. We also need help with **donations**. This means mattresses and box springs, tables, couches, chairs, dressers, pots, and pans. This also means **volunteers with trucks** who can help us pick these items up when offered! The commitment only needs be once a month.

If you are already involved with VRRP, then we can't thank you enough for the enormous difference that you're already making in someone's life. We won't ask you to take on another responsibility, but we will ask you to **spread the word**. Let your book group, colleagues, church or temple, or choir know about our needs. Maybe your friend's knitting club has a member who can donate a bed, or the local Boy Scout troop is able to collect



donations of necessary household items like soap and sponges.

If you aren't already involved with VRRP — or if your family is well-settled and you'd like to volunteer with a new family all over again — we'd be happy to talk with you about the opportunities, commitment, and experience. You are welcome to attend an open house, which is a forum for volunteers and interested community members to discuss the organization, volunteer program, and their experiences. In June, open houses are on Fridays between 11-1; in July, they will be on Thursdays from 5:30-7:30. Please contact Judy (338-4627 or jscott@uscrvt.org) or Rio (338-4633 or rholiday@uscrvt.org) for more information or for a volunteer application. We look forward to welcoming the 1972 Burundians with you!

Volunteering Produces Health Benefits

Continued from page 6

ful benefits to a person's body and mind."

Last month, the Corporation released *Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life*, a report that includes numerous measures on volunteering and civic engagement. The Health Benefits of Volunteering report builds on that by showing states with higher volunteer rates also have better health and that there is a significant statistical relationship between states with higher volunteer rates and lower incidents of mortality and heart disease.

"There is now a convergence of research leading to the conclusion that helping others makes people happier and healthier. So the word is out — it's good to be good. Science increasingly says so," said Dr. Stephen Post, a professor at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and co-author of the forthcoming book "Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The Exciting New Research That Proves the Link Between Doing Good and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life."

This follow-up report issued brings more evidence that volunteering produces significant health benefits. Those

who gave social support to others had lower rates of mortality than those who did not — even when controlling for socioeconomic status, education, marital status, age, gender, and ethnicity, the report stated.

"Civic Engagement and volunteering is the new hybrid health club for the 21st century that's free to join," added Thomas H. Sander, executive director of the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University. Social capital research shows it miraculously improves both your health AND the community's through the work performed and the social ties built."

Out of a Crack

Continued from page 1

duce them to the wonders of the phone. Neither could we guess how quickly they would master memorizing all their friends' phone numbers and multi-tasking by phoning while cleaning, folding laundry, or feeding the children.

Along with the Burundians, another group to arrive this summer may be Iraqis who, because they proved their trustworthiness to American forces, later found themselves marked for retribution. Two million Iraqis have fled their native land; a small number may be resettled in the U.S. These are likely to be well-educated people who speak at least some English and who are strongly pro-democracy. In this new place it will be difficult for them to use the professional skills they worked so hard to develop in their homeland.

For anyone starting life in a new country, but especially for those whose cultures differ so much, the gist of the pleasures, the struggles, and the awkwardnesses is entirely unpredictable. Equally unpredictable is every next horizon for our office. After a year of very low arrivals, it will take some time to build our staff to meet the needs of a new population (or two). This is one of the reasons why we always say we could not do our work the way we want without volunteers. Staff and volunteers working together increase exponentially what we can offer to newcomers. The talents and commitment of volunteers combined with the experience and knowledge of staff give newcomers the tools that make

successful resettlement possible.

Rio, Jessie, and I have already been trying to prepare, just in case this materialized. We've been working on developing a new corps of volunteers to be ready to dive in when needed. We're also counting on experienced volunteers to act as mentors for those just getting started with the new families. If you'd like to be "on call" for a new volunteer group to offer advice and encouragement as they begin their own relationship with a new family, please let us know. We also have a schedule of presentations we're offering to groups interested in working with us. This includes church or synagogue outreach committees, service organizations, and special interest groups whose members might enjoy volunteering. We are also calling on our dedicated volunteers to help us recruit friends, family or colleagues who share some of your compassion, enjoyment of a new challenge, and commitment to sharing your time.

If the family you've worked with is pretty well-settled now and you have the time to give to help a new one, let me know. If you know of a group whose members might like to get involved in volunteering or in donating, tell me who they are. As people with experience in refugee resettlement, you are our best volunteer recruiters. As

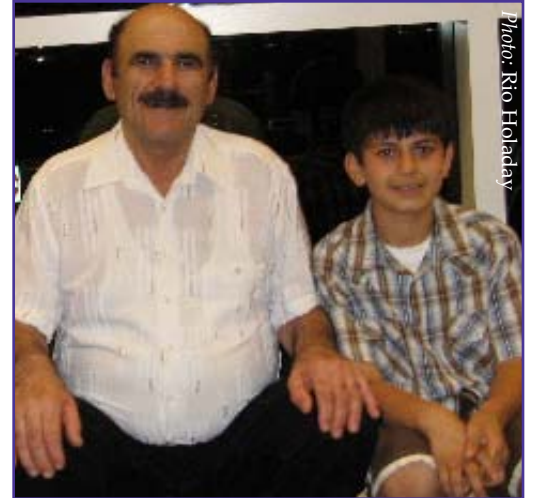


Photo: Rio Holaday

you move through your life, please think about your friends or family members who might like this sort of work and talk with them about it. I'd be happy to give them a call or, better yet, please bring them to meet me at a volunteer open house (dates and times on page 9). VRRP staff could not do our work the way we want to without teaming up with volunteers who go above and beyond what staff can do. This summer and fall we must enlarge our team and we need your help to find those new team members and to guide them. Please give it some thought – and increase the value you already offer refugee resettlement by bringing in some friends.

VRRP STAFF PHONE DIRECTORY

Ahmed Mohamoud	Employment Counselor	802-338-4625
Amila Begovic	Direct Services Manager	802-654-1716
Bob Sanders	Director	802-654-1700
Clare Zuraw	AmeriCorps-Citizenship Project	802-338-4632
Drew Loizeaux	Accountant	802-654-1733
Fatuma Bulle	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1706
Jacqueline Rose	Coordinator of Interpreting Services	802-654-1706
Judy Scott	Coordinator of Community Services	802-338-4627
Laura Donohue	AmeriCorps-Citizenship Project	802-338-4632
Loan Nguyen	Elder Specialist	802-654-1701
Marija Valencak	Deputy Director	802-654-1705
Megan Cannella	ELT Coordinator	802-654-1704
Nada Popovac	Front Office Manager	802-655-1963
Olga Foss	Case Manager/Employment Counselor	802-654-1717
	Barre Office	802-479-7547
Rashid Hussein	Case Manager	802-654-1707
Rio Holaday	AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer Office	802-338-4633
Volunteers and Interns	Volunteer Office	802-338-4633
Wendy Reid	Relationship Enrichment Coordinator	802-338-1860

*email addresses follow this pattern: Judy Scott = jscott@uscrvt.org
(Exception: Volunteer Office = volunteer@uscrvt.org)*

Please join us in welcoming **Olga Foss** to our staff. She is our new Russian-speaking Case Manager/Employment Counselor.

ELT volunteer tutors, please note that Jessica Bassett is no longer at VRRP. If you have tutoring-related questions, please contact Megan Cannella, ELT Coordinator, at 654-1704.

Good luck to Lee, Amanda, and Jessica as they pursue new opportunities!

community buzz

July Issue

The deadline for the next issue of this newsletter will be June 20th. We'd love to include **your** article on your volunteer efforts, what you've learned from this work, or what you've figured out about how to go about it. Any photographs you'd like to share will be welcome too. Or if you have news of a local or world event, please consider contributing it. In the same way that VRRP staff can't do our work the way we want to without volunteers, the value of the newsletter is enriched in direct proportion to your involvement.

Please e-mail your contributions to jscott@uscrvt.org before June 20th. We'd love to hear from you!

Volunteer Training

Green Cards: Application Process & Timeline

Thursday, June 14 from 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Presenters: Laura Donohue and Clare Zuraw, VRRP AmeriCorps Citizenship Project

Refugees are required to apply for Green Cards after they have been in the U.S. for one year. The application process can be confusing for newcomers, and Laura and Clare will explain the process, debunk myths, and answer questions. They will be leaving VRRP in August, so make use of their experience while you still can!

Please let Rio know if you plan to join us (338-4633, rholiday@uscrvt.org).

Volunteer Open Houses

In June, volunteer open houses at VRRP will be held between 11:00 and 1:00 on Fridays. Open houses provide a terrific opportunity for new volunteers to drop in and get together with Judy, other staff members, and other volunteers to ask questions and learn more about the services provided by VRRP. You can also pick up a volunteer application to fill out. If you'd like to fill it out here, remember to bring contact information for three references. For experienced volunteers, the open houses give us a chance to talk over how things are going, to get new ideas, and to ask questions. **Because it's particularly helpful for new volunteers to talk with experienced people about their involvement, we encourage you veterans to come and share your knowledge!** Refreshments will be served. We hope you'll come!

July open houses will happen on Thursdays between 5:30 and 7:30 for those of you who prefer coming in the evening. Put it on your calendar -- we'd love to see you!

BOOK CLUB

In June we will read
"New Americans, New Voices."

"New Americans New Voices" is a compilation of 11 personal stories, told by local refugees and immigrants, and written with the help of Vermont writing partners. The writers came to Vermont from Sudan, Rwanda, Congo, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Albania, and Bosnia. If you have kept up with our newsletter, you will have read Bol Gai's "Thorny Path," which came from this twenty-week project. The book is a quick read of 41 pages, but the fact that these writers are part of our community promises that the stories will be deeply affecting.

We have 30 copies of "New Americans, New Voices" available at the office. You are welcome to purchase one for \$3, or to borrow one. Please email or call Rio to reserve one.

The daytime meeting will be on **Thursday, June 21 from 12:30 - 1:30**. The evening meeting will be one week later on **Thursday, June 28 from 5:30 - 6:30**. We hope that the short book length will encourage people to attend who have not done so regularly! Please let Rio know which meeting you plan to come to; likewise, please tell me if you won't be joining us this month.

We hope that new participants will join us!

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 the fort Ethan Allen Complex.

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