

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

Patterns are a great source of reassurance. This past winter was such a long one that, even for a snow-lover like me, every late March snowstorm disconcerted me. I made myself feel better by remembering that it couldn't go on much longer. The seasonal pattern would reassert itself: winter couldn't last forever; spring would follow.

Babies learn the patterns of life from infancy. A baby who wakes up hungry can learn that he doesn't need to cry while his diaper is being changed because that's the prelude to being fed. But if milk doesn't immediately follow that diaper change, the wails break out all over again. If you can't count on the patterns life has taught you, then life becomes a scary experience.

Reliance on the patterns of life is what people lose when they are forced to become refugees. We tend to focus on the concrete losses: parents killed, homes burned down, homeland irretrievably lost. But perhaps this loss of the patterns of life is the

most disorienting.

I've been thinking about this as we begin the resettlement of three new populations – Iraqis, Bhutanese, and Burmese. Today I met two new arrivals at the airport – a mother and her elementary-school-age daughter. The little girl was so happy to be off the plane, so happy to be in America, so open to new patterns in her life. Their host, who was there with us to greet them, was equally happy to see them, equally and selflessly ready to let go of the patterns of her own life. I'm always touched by the host families who are willing to open their homes to strangers. What a way to shake up your life like a kaleidoscope and form a whole new perspective! Shaking off the old patterns isn't easy but, sometimes, it's the most fulfilling choice.

One of our new Bhutanese families talked recently with their host family about how difficult it was to make the choice to leave the familiar behind when they came here. Their

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 238 volunteers, we are offering a new life to people who have endured the harshest conditions in hopes of a new opportunity.

Nepalese ancestors had been invited to settle an uninhabited part of neighboring Bhutan. For generations they did the arduous work of developing and cultivating the soil. 15 years ago the government, seeing how productive the land had become, forced the current landowners out of the country and into refugee camps in Nepal. Over 100,000 are warehoused in seven camps. For 13 years they and the Nepalese government have been negotiating with Bhutan to repatriate them but, year after year, the talks have failed. Our new family said that their greatest desire was to return to build new lives in their homeland but they lost hope. When they were offered a chance at resettlement in the U.S., they felt they must take on any challenge that would open up an opportunity to work and create a viable future. Much as they wanted to hold onto that familiar pattern of life in Bhutan, the hopelessness of the refugee camp drove them to take on whatever new pattern

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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Flight from Albania

By Ilia Dinis
Written with Mike Reilly

When the day came, we asked each other, "Anyone want out?" We decided we were all in it together. So we set out at 3 a.m. – we walked for over two hours, and then hitched a two-and-a-half-hour truck ride. We went north, thinking we had a better chance at the border than with the sea. The truck driver asked many questions, but we pretended we had work up north. I think he knew better, though, and he stopped before the village to drop us off.

We had to go up a mountain, called Nemerchka. The crossing would be near two guard posts. Most all the trees had been cut, so the soldiers could see far. We were between the guard posts, so we crawled in the daylight. It's funny, but I remember I could smell the grass, flowers, wild tea and the morning breeze.

I thought this was a perfect place to be. We were not yet afraid. I was with my friends and it was like we were going to a party.

A big storm came about 4 p.m. and we were still pretty far from the border, which had razor wire and a high voltage electric fence. The storm raged on – we

were soaked and the storm made things dark as night. We found a bunker and made sure no soldiers were there. Our legs were cut from crawling and we were tired. We had some food, so we stayed there for a few hours.

By about 4 a.m. it was still raining, but we had to go in the darkness. There was a two hundred yard "warning track" before the fence, so the soldiers could see footprints. We thought with darkness and the rain, maybe we'd get lucky.



We were near the Greek border, and we could see the lights of so many cars. None of us had seen such a thing. "What are all those cars?" we asked. And we got scared. We didn't know exactly the lines of the border and thought that even if we

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Volunteer Appreciation!

By Jacqueline Rose

Both Lauren Berrizbetia and Dalib Bulle deserve recognition for their sunny appearance at the Crime Victims Services Award ceremony on April 17th in Montpelier. Lauren, a long-time VRRP volunteer and host family, publicly recognized Dalib, a New American Somali Bantu, for his on-going courage and kindness in his role as school liaison in Burlington Schools. Dalib, also a part-time interpreter at VRRP, graciously accepted his award in front of a receptive crowd, with a speech about how appreciative he is of Lauren, as well as of Judy Scott and others at VRRP, for

their continuing help in making his transition to Vermont a successful one.

Dalib's efforts in the school system, as well as in his personal life, have supported numerous families in Vermont. Lauren was sure to mention that part of what makes Dalib so special is his magnanimous attitude and receptivity toward both Somali and Somali Bantu people as they enter the school system and the community. Of particular note, she highlighted his commitment to leaving behind old prejudices and putting aside the vestiges of conflict between these cultures.

The award ceremony is an annual event that showcases the efforts of crime victims and their advocates in getting justice, and always falls during Crime Victims Services week, which this year occurred April 13-18. The award ceremony followed a Red Flag commemoration outside of the capitol building, and a keynote speech by Public Safety Commissioner Tom Tremblay. Dalib was the first Somali to receive such an award in Vermont, and deserves to be proud of the achievement and his accomplishments.

THAILAND: The mechanics of resettling Burmese refugees

(IRIN News) (February 2008) (<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=76761>)

MAE SOT, 15 February 2008 (IRIN) - Ka Lae Min holds up his colourful drawing of a tree. "The three roots are myself, my family and my ethnicity, he said, "and the flowers are my achievements - I finished high school; am now free from the military junta in Burma [Myanmar]; and am on my way to America. And the buds," the 30-year-old adds, "are my dreams - that I can get a real college degree, raise a family and some day, in the future, help the people in Burma establish democracy."

Ka Lae Min's drawing was produced as an exercise in a cultural orientation session for Myanmar refugees - mostly ethnic Karens from the eastern part of the country.

They are being prepared by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their departure from refugee camps on the Thai border to new homes and lives in the USA. The USA is one of some 11 countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Finland, which have taken in a total of some 40,000 Burmese (Myanmar) refugees since 2004.

"Nearly 15,000 refugees were resettled in 2007 with just over 10,000 going to the USA," according to Pierre King, head of the

IOM branch office in Mae Sot. "This year some 14,000-17,000 will be resettled in the USA alone."

Officially there are some 140,000 Myanmar refugees in nine refugee camps on the Thai side of the Thai-Myanmar border.

Most of the refugees have painful stories to tell of fleeing the Burmese Army, of the heat of battle between the government and the Karen National Union (an armed rebel movement - KNU), and of lives and livelihoods wasted in refugee camps where movement is restricted and employment possible only if you sneak out illegally to do menial day labour.

Saw Eh Mwee, a Karen refugee and former rice farmer, told IRIN: "Those of us who left cannot go back." He said he wants to be resettled in another country because "in Thailand we have no right of movement and for the past 20 years I have had no employment".

Thai Di, another Karen refugee and a farmer, added: "My family and I are afraid to return to Burma... I am not educated, I am illiterate, but my hope is that by going to America my children will have a good

VRRP is excited to announce that it has begun resettlement of Burmese refugees currently warehoused in camps in Thailand.

The new Burmese families join our recent resettlement groups of Bhutanese currently displaced in Nepal and Iraqi refugees scattered throughout the Middle East.

education and a future."

Procedures

For those who desire to be resettled to the USA, Yoshimi Saita, head of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) field office in Mae Sot, told IRIN, their names and registry information are first checked by

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Volunteer Updates!

By Marcia Stone

Well this could certainly prove to be the most exciting Spring that we have had in a very long time! We are all bursting with excitement here at the VRRP volunteer office! We have arrivals expected from many different sources! The first that should be mentioned is that our very own Megan Cannella, ELT Coordinator, and her husband are expecting twins any day now! That arrival will probably not need the assistance of our staff and volunteers! On behalf of all the volunteers, I wish you well Megan and you will be a wonderful mother!

We have received confirmation of many arrivals coming and very soon! These arrivals are coming from Burma, Bhutan, Iraq, Somalia and Congo. This is the perfect time to jump on board as a vol-

unteer because chances are you can get started right away with a family. Remember the old saying, "when it rains, it pours!" and we love the rain! Although it is sometimes very stressful to take care of everyone's needs when so many refugees arrive at once, it is always done with joy as this means that these wonderful people will now have a chance to live a safe and peaceful life. There is no one more important to our new arrivals than their volunteers. Volunteers make the difference between success and failure in our complex daily lives. I also have to say that it is rare that a volunteer is not somehow changed by this wonderful experience. We look forward to our new volunteers joining our welcome team.

There are three special projects coming up that we need help with this month. **World Refugee Day is June 21st.**

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The New Wave: Burlington's Tech Savvy Refugee Population

By Emily Cochrane

VRRP's ELT Department thanks the Ben & Jerry's Community Foundation for its support of the At-Home Computer Initiative, a program designed to connect refugee families with English language computer software. Computer literacy is an important skill for many refugees who wish to become conversant in this significant part of US culture. Last fall, VRRP teamed up with Burlington's Fletcher Free Library to teach students to use the Rosetta Stone ESL CD-ROM program, which is installed on the Library's laptops. Students received library cards, learned to navigate the laptops and gained familiarity with this great ESL software. VRRP's students increased their computer literacy skills and demonstrated a serious motivation to use these computer skills at home.

In response to this growing need for

computer education, the ELT department developed the At-Home Computer Initiative. The program was prompted by the efforts of Mary K O'Brien, a Barnes Elementary School ESL teacher who found computers from ReCycle North, the Rotary Club and the Burlington School District on her own time. She gave these computers to over fifteen refugee families connected to her school. The computers had basic math and English games for children, but no resources for adults. Although the families now had computers, the adults had no ESL learning tools.

Fueled by interest from families wishing to use their computers for at-home learning, the ELT Department applied for a grant from the Ben & Jerry's Community Foundation to supply these families with English language software. The program, Learn to Speak English Deluxe by the Learning Company, pro-

motes grammar and conversation skills, while simultaneously reinforcing basic computer skills. Participating adults will attend a training session at the Fletcher Free Library to teach program usage. Volunteer English Tutors who regularly tutor these adults will be notified and are also asked to attend. Using Learn to Speak English with students will be an excellent way to explore alternative methods of learning and language use, as well as to maximize support and appropriate, effective use of this English language software.

The At-Home Computer Initiative will not only provide busy students with an easy, home method of studying English, but it may also impact employment opportunities by creating a new wave of computer literate refugees in Burlington. Thank you Ben & Jerry's for your generous support!

The Effects of Rising Food Costs on Refugees and IDPs

By Joel Charny (Refugees International)

DAR ES SALAAM, Dec 27, 2007 (AFP) - Recently the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) issued an extraordinary emergency appeal to international donors. Due to soaring food and fuel prices, WFP is facing a shortfall of some \$500 million in its efforts to feed over 70 million people this year, over half of whom are refugees and internally displaced persons. As most displaced people already face severely limited access to food, the global food crisis will have a disproportionate effect on them.

While food prices had been increasing over the last five years, other factors have emerged recently to make the situation especially acute. There is increasing competition for land between bio-fuel crop producers and food producers. Fuel costs are rising for food transportation. Australia, one of the leading grain producers in the world, is in the midst of a ten-year drought. And elevated standards of living around the globe, especially in

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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 21 from 11:00 - 4:00 at the Unitarian Universalist Church at the top of Church St.

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

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

Bike Recycle Vermont

by Wilson Skinner

Bike Recycle Vermont began in July 2004 to provide bicycles for Somali 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 three years BRV has repaired and distributed close to 2000 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, alternative and transitional programs.

Bike Recycle Vermont still operates close to the bone with only one full-time employee, program director Mark Rowell, and an Americorps/VISTA volunteer, Wilson Skinner. BRV has stayed close to its original philosophy by maintaining a strong volunteer team.

This year BRV has launched an Earn-a-bike program, which allows youths to work in the shop to "earn" a bike of their choosing. Thus far the program has been a success and has attracted numerous participants from the refugee community. If you are interested in volunteering or are seeking bikes, please feel free to contact us at info@bikerecycle.localmotion.org or by calling 802-264-9687.

Flight from Albania
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got through the fence, running in the dark and woods we might run back into Albania and to the soldiers.

Sam knew how to "jump" the electric wire in the fence, and this bought us some time to cut a small hole in the fence and we got through.

But soon the soldiers heard or saw, and they began to fire their AK-47 rifles. One bullet ricocheted and hit Mike in the leg. He told us to go on, but we all agreed we'd make it together or be killed together.

There was a small Greek army post nearby. I don't think the Greek soldiers were authorized to shoot at the Albanians, but they shot their guns in the air. This caused the Albanian soldiers to cut their chase short. We breathed a bit easier, but Mike was still losing much blood.

Scared and confused, we kept moving –

unsure of where we were. But we saw that the Greek side was so much different. It was very green with trees, and on the Albanian side, trees had been cleared. We followed and found a Greek village at the end of the trees, and also a fresh spring. But we still feared failure. Mike was weak and we couldn't stop his bleeding.

Then we found a farm with sheep, and a farmer came out and spoke to us in Greek. He made us a fire, tended to Mike's leg, gave us clothes to wear. We knew we were safe. He called the police for us. We had crossed the border illegally, so had to stay under house arrest at the police station for about two weeks, so they could check to see if we were spies!

Locals heard about us, and brought us



food and clothes, and Mike received doctor's care. By the end, the cops were our friends. They broke their own rules on the last night and took us to a restaurant and paid our bills.

By morning, we were in Ioanina, Greece.

The mechanics of resettling Burmese refugees

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UNHCR and then given to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) which processes the refugees for the US government.

IRC does the paperwork, checks out family details, conducts a preliminary interview and writes a narrative of the family's history. The information is then provided to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which conducts a final interview.

A refugee who has been accepted for resettlement draws a tree as a part of an IOM cultural orientation project in Mae La refugee camp, Thailand. February 2008.

DHS criteria

An official at the US embassy in Thailand told IRIN: "At this point the only real consideration in the DHS interview is to discern whether the refugee has credible fear of persecution if he or she returns based on race, creed or religion." He also said they would not accept refugees with criminal records.

The US government in the past two years has liberalised its provisions regarding refugees who have been deemed to have

given "material support" to some six groups that have been fighting the Myanmar army over the years.

In the resettlement process IOM does everything from transporting the refugees for interviews, to giving them a basic cultural orientation (how to change planes, use Western-style toilets and kitchen appliances), to equipping them with "survival English" - key words and phrases to get them by as they enter a strange new world. Finally, it prepares the refugees for their travels and makes all flight arrangements.

Three camps

Most of the refugees who are currently being resettled are from three camps in Tak District - Nupo, Umpiem Mai and Mae La. According to the UNHCR, the three camps hold a total of some 70,000 refugees or 50 percent of the total in the nine current border refugee camps.

Until 22 January, interviews and processing was done in the camps themselves but IOM has now opened a processing facility in a huge unused factory building in Mae Sot, the largest city along the Myanmar border. It enables many of the steps in the

resettlement process to be more centralised and efficient and reduces security concerns.

The most important IOM role in the resettlement process is overseeing complete medical check-ups, including chest X-rays which are done at a private hospital in Mae Sot. If a refugee is found to have tuberculosis or another disease, he is not rejected but his departure is delayed until he undergoes treatment. HIV status is tested, but is not a barrier to resettlement in the USA. IOM provides AIDS awareness and prevention briefings before departure.

Three options

Some have criticised the resettlement process, but as Hans Beckers, IOM regional programme coordinator for resettlement and voluntary returns, told IRIN:

"There are three options: Return to their country?" He says it is not an option now or for the foreseeable future.

"Integrate into Thai society?" The government is unwilling to allow it at this time.

"Or resettle to a third country with the opportunity for more productive lives."

The effects of rising food costs on refugees and IDPs

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China and India, have led to greater consumption and reduced food stocks.

Food shortages are starting to trigger violent popular reactions in many countries, which in turn may lead to greater displacement. The protests led by Buddhist monks in Burma last September were a response to deteriorating economic conditions, and the government's harsh crackdown displaced hundreds of people. Recently, violent protests in response to rising food prices have occurred in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopian, Haiti, Indonesia, Mauritania, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

An immediate concern is the ability of aid organizations to sustain feeding programs in refugee camps within existing budget constraints. The Thai-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) has been working to highlight the budgetary impact on their feeding programs for Burmese refugees in Thailand. From mid-February to the end of March this year, the cost of rice purchased locally nearly doubled from \$343 to \$625 per ton, and more increases are predicted. As of now, TBBC is being asked to absorb these increases, leading to reductions in the overall food ration for the refugees.

Aid agencies working with refugees and internally displaced people in Sudan, Chad, Liberia, and Ghana have also reported reducing daily rations to compensate for the increased food prices. In part, this is due to many donors shifting contributions away from long-term food aid and towards emergency operations only. The resulting funding gaps are significant. In Chad, food programs for refugees and IDPs are 94% underfunded for 2008. In Yemen, the

gap is 81%, in Sudan it is 45%, in Uganda it is 67%, and for groups working with displaced Iraqis, the funding gap is 87%.

These food shortages can contribute to insecurity for humanitarian operations. In Sudan, WFP has reported that more than 60 trucks have gone missing since the beginning of the year. UNICEF has warned that such attacks slow humanitarian operations in the region and in the current environment, replacing food supplies is made even more difficult.

The United States has the ability to contribute significantly to WFP's \$500 million shortfall, and Congress will likely be generous to the agency in allocations from the FY2008 supplemental appropriations bill currently being developed. But even for the US, the stress on current budgets is severe. According to the Food for Peace Deputy Director, Jonathan Dworken, the US Agency for International Development has had to cut about \$120 million for future aid programs to pay for current commitments due to rising commodity prices.

The vulnerability of the displaced to food shortages underscores the need to give them the opportunity, the security, and the resources to feed themselves. Either through wage employment or through agricultural production, most displaced people would far prefer to care for themselves rather than depend on food rations. But host governments normally restrict the ability of refugees to access the local labor market. And insecurity and economic failure make it difficult for the people displaced within their country to meet their own needs even if they have the right to own land and work. Addressing these problems is essential to lessening the dependence of the displaced on increasingly expensive food hand-outs.

Volunteer Updates!

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We need help with set up and clean up, as well as help during the event. This is not open to the public so if you volunteer for the day you will have a wonderful opportunity to meet amazing people, eat fabulous food and hear wonderful music as well as witness wonderful performances by our new friends and neighbors.

We also need volunteers to help us with a **donation letter** going out. All that is required is a pen and a short list of friends or generous folks you know with an interest in successful refugee resettlement. This would only take an evening of your time and would be fun to gather some friends and do it together as a group. (friends do not have to be a VRRP volunteer for this project)

We also have our annual **Benefit Dinner on June 29th**. The last benefit sold out very early! This one promises to be as fabulous because Supriya is helping us again! The dinner will be held at the First Congregational Church in

Burlington
from
6:00 -
9:00. If
you want
to help,
please call
Marcia at
338-4627.
Many hands
make light
work so I
hope many
of you will
offer to
help us
with this
event.

I know many of you have been calling the office in response to several emails circulated by our friends and current volunteers. Hopefully between Deirdre and myself, you have had a phone call or email by now. If you have not heard from us in



a week or so please do give another call or send an email to dsmith@uscrivt.org. Volunteer groups are being formed now and if you have a group that you would like to work with just let us know!

Out of a Crack

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they might find.

Our first two Burmese families arrived in April. A couple of days later several staff members sat with both families to check in on how they were doing. They told us they'd spent the last 20 years in refugee camps in Thailand. Half of them had never known any life but the refugee camp. After asking some questions and discussing some minor health concerns, the elder in the group told us they were feeling homesick.

Their case manager smiled and told them about his own arrival. It had been in early winter. As he left the airport he was astonished to see and feel snow falling. The coldest temperature he'd ever felt had been 20 degrees above freezing so this was a shock. And it continued to snow for 108 days – not every day, but many days. He said that, even though he liked the snow, it and many other things made him feel homesick. But now, he pointed out, it was raining. In his country, there was always rain throughout April. He laughed as he told us how good it feels to him to be out in the rain. Rain in April just feels right – it fits the pattern – it makes him feel that all is right in the world. The Burmese

newcomers listened, fascinated, hopeful that they too would adjust.

Over last weekend I was talking with a client who described to me a period in his life of several years when he was constantly fleeing from danger. Throughout that time his life was what Joseph Conrad called “a choice between nightmares.” He ended up living on a tiny island where he would have starved if he hadn't been able to fish. That's how he spent his days. He stared into the water, looking for fish to catch. The strangest part was that during that time he had no thoughts. There was nothing to think about. “You can't imagine what it is to have no thoughts,” he told me. And I know he's right. I tried, and I can't imagine that.

But he still dreamed when he was asleep. He often dreamed of his former life when he was in school, busy with classes and homework, pressured but proud that his family was counting on him to develop his potential. He dreamed about the food his mother used to cook. In his dreams even the simplest meal was a feast. His family was talking while they ate – they were all full of thoughts, busy with many things that had to be done and said. When he woke up he wondered which was the dream, his old life or this present emptiness.

Eventually he decided that his former life was the dream and the emptiness of now was the only reality.

He ate when he could catch a fish. He went hungry when he couldn't. That is the pattern of emptiness. Empty stomach, empty life.

What a shock to go from that to arrival at Burlington Airport. You are met by a throng of VRRP staff and volunteers. Most of them are chattering in English. You were already overwhelmed by 30+ hours on airplanes but, now, finding yourself in an immense building surrounded by so many strange-looking English speakers, what pattern can you possibly find to fit all this into?

Each day that follows will be another chance, another challenge, to make sense of this new, seemingly incomprehensible, culture. In the final analysis, each person does this individually. But not alone. The strength and courage to take on such a difficult task come from connections with others who help sort through the myriad pieces of the new pattern. Together, refugees, staff, and volunteers create their own pattern which becomes a source of energy and reassurance for the future.



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Nada Popovac	Front Office Manager	802-655-1963
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(Exception: Volunteer Office = volunteer@uscrvt.org)*

community buzz

Volunteer Newsletter Articles Wanted! From You!

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 June newsletter are due May 20th.

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 Orientation provide a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our organization, 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 **May**, Orientations are held every **Monday except for Memorial Day** from 5:30 - 7:00.

If daytime meeting times are better for you, then you're welcome to come to one of our **June** Orientations, which will be held the every **Friday** from 11:30 - 1:00

We look forward to seeing you there!

Save Your Bottles!

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

Any money that VRRP receive 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!

March Volunteer Training

Culture and Religions of Iraq

6:00- 7:30 Tuesday, May 20

Presenter: Areej Kadhem, VRRP Interpreter and recent Iraqi arrival will discuss different aspects of Iraqi culture and ways in which religion and culture may, or may not, interconnect..

Please contact Deirdre (dsmith@uscrvt.org or 338-4632) if you plan to join us for a training. Out of respect for our presenters, **we will cancel sessions if volunteers do not RSVP**. Unless otherwise noted, all trainings take place at the VRRP office.

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.)