

# 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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## 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.



## Out of a Crack

By Judy Scott

The election night speeches moved me deeply. It's been a very long time since I heard, from two different politicians on the same day, so much grace, fortitude, and intelligence. Part of my excitement that night arose because more Americans voted in this election than in any in the history of our country. More of us cared, more of us learned about the issues, and more of us took advantage of our right to civic engagement than ever before.

As I listened to the three words that have become familiar to all of us during this campaign, "yes, we can," I thought to myself that the most important one is the middle one. By himself, the next President cannot pull us out of the difficult times we are in. We must work together to get through them. We must be ready to do what's right for our country.

When new refugee arrivals come to Vermont, I have an opportunity to sit down with them during their first week here. I have only 10-15 minutes to welcome them and tell them whatever I think is

most important for them to know, right from the start, about their new country. I say something like this:

"America is a country of immigrants. You are the newest of those immigrants. All of us have ancestors who came from another place. Many of them came because life was so bad in their country that they had no future there. When they arrived here they found a new struggle. It was hard to find work, hard to speak English, and hard to find people who were trustworthy. They had to endure privations and take advantage of every opportunity, no matter how small, to become successful. This collective history has made Americans very respectful of independence and self-reliance.

"The goal of VRRP is to give you the tools to build a new life here. And it is your responsibility to use those tools and to build that new life well. Think about this as if you had to build your own house. It would be our responsibility to give you the best tools and materials we have and it would be your responsibility to build the best house you can. Every new arrival would build a house that looks different

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.

from the others. That's good. We like diversity. Some houses would be stronger than others. I hope that you would choose to use your tools and materials so well that your house would be strong and long-lasting.

"But you're not building a house – you're building a whole new life. Some of the most important tools we will give you are help with finding a job, classes on how to be a successful employee, and classes on how to speak English. These are the most valuable tools we can give you. It's our responsibility to give them to you, free of charge, for the next five years. It's your responsibility to learn as much as you can at these classes and to work hard at the employment opportunities that we can offer you.

"Other people from your culture have told me that they value community more than independence. Building a community in which people help and teach each other will be one of the most important things you can do for yourself, your family, and your community. The value of enduring adversity together and supporting each other to achieve a goal

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## A Family History

By Somu Timsina

*On October 19, Judy Scott and Somu Timsina spoke to the congregation at the First Unitarian Universalist in downtown Burlington. This is the speech that Timsina gave discussing the history of his family and his experience moving to Vermont.*

In 1989, Bhutan, a tiny Himalayan Kingdom ruled by a despotic monarch suddenly came in the news. People of Nepali-origin carried out a series of protests, demanding democracy and human rights. The consequences were unbearable. Every protestor/supporter of democratic movement was captured, jailed, tortured brutally and asked to leave the country signing a paper. Many of our beloved relatives had died in the prisons.

One reason why people of Nepali-origin wanted democracy and human rights was that they were ordered to abandon the Nepali clothes and study of Nepali languages and other religious and cultural practices and follow a Drukpa way

of life under what is known as 'Bhutanization' and 'one-people-one-nation' policy of the king of Bhutan. I was too young to grasp the scale of the tragedy as I was then just 11 years old. I don't remember much of the things that happened. My grandfather and my own father told the history of what had happened and why we were in the refugee camps in Nepal.

My father had a successful orange business in Bhutan. We proudly owned one of the largest orange orchards in the country. My grand father had sacrificed his entire life to make this possible. We were a family of 15 living in the same house. We owned some 40 acres of lands, large tracts of forests and a vast orange orchard, paddy fields spanning over several hectors.

In about two decades, from 1980 to 1990, my father and the entire family worked so hard that the family that at one time had not seen the outside world, not eaten a full-stomach meal, was prospering rapidly. Sometimes, the pot-bellied King's people were envious when they passed by the orchard our grandfather had raised. Today my grandfather is no more. He died shortly after fleeing

Bhutan. It resulted from shocks and pain of having to quit his orchard and home.

Today, every stone and mud bear the foot-prints of our grandfather. His soul is surely roaming in the orchard with bees and birds. We have not seen our land, the newly built house, and the orchard since 1990, but a Bhutanese coming here from that place told us it now belongs to a ruling class - Drukpa. It's difficult to describe how painfully we left behind our properties and lived in squalid camps filled with dirt for 17 years. We were 14 members in the family living in a single hut with simply bamboo-made walls and the sky above.

I had a dream to become an engineer that got shattered when I had to leave my school in Delhi after my uncle who was funding me went into meditation out of frustrations and stopped funding me. But we feel today heavily indebted to the UNHCR and the US government for rescuing us from the humanitarian catastrophe. If we were not brought here, we would perish in Nepal in a few years without knowing what the outside of the refugee camps looked like.

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## Coming to a New Land

By Greg Duggan

The country of Bhutan crowned a new king earlier this month, right around the time Barack Obama was elected the next president of the United States.

A small, Himalayan country of about 680,000 nestled between China and India, Bhutan prides itself on measuring Gross National Happiness. Pictures from the coronation of the new king showed smiling people, dancers dressed in flowing, vibrant traditional garments.

But the colorful pictures obscured the country's darker side, the story of the more than 100,000 refugees who have fled political persecution.

In the late 1980s the Bhutanese government enacted laws discriminating against the country's ethnic Nepali population — requirements for all citizens to wear the traditional clothing and speak the traditional language of the Drukpa majority. Residents with Nepalese heritage lost their citizenship status and, in the early '90s, were forced to leave Bhutan for refugee camps in Nepal and India.

The Nepal family came to Vermont in late July after living in one of the camps for nearly 20 years.

"We had a hard life," Purushotum, the family's 23-year-old son, told me the night after the family arrived, when we all sat in the Nepals' Winooski apartment attempting to communicate.

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*photo by Karin Johuson*

## Thank you to the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation!

*By Karin Johnson*



*photo by Karin Johnson*

David Hill with Somu Timsina at his home where they installed many CFLs to save on energy costs.

Lydia Hill has been both stalwart and creating in the volunteer work she has done with several different new refugee families. She and her husband, David went above and beyond this high standard when they applied and received an Energy Efficiency Assistance Award for VRRP with the Good Ideas Group at the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC). The VEIC grant provides energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) to our refugee families to save on energy costs.

Utility bills are among the many financial burdens that are new to the lives of VRRP clients. Any help with reducing energy bills helps further our clients path to self-sufficiency. In addition, lessons on energy conservation go in hand with the introduction of CFLs into homes and helps to save our environment!

With your help, we can quickly reach all of our families to replace incandescent lightbulbs in homes with CFLs. If you volunteer with a family that can use CFLs to save on their energy costs please contact Karin Johnson by phone or email at (802)338-4632 or [kjohnson@uscrvt.org](mailto:kjohnson@uscrvt.org).

## Death of South African singer, Miriam Makeba

*courtesy of U.S. State Department briefing*

The United States extends its condolences to the family of Miriam Makeba and the people of South Africa on the sudden passing of this musical legend.

Makeba, who passed away in Italy at age 76 after performing on November 9, was a musical icon who inspired South Africans during and after the fight to end apartheid in her native country. After being banned from apartheid-era South Africa for her outspoken political views for more than 30 years, Makeba was able to serve as a source of inspiration and hope for South Africa's oppressed by reaching them through her music. After the fall of apartheid, she returned to play a positive role through her music in the newly democratic South Africa.

Makeba was the first African woman to win the prestigious Grammy Award and also earned the affectionate title of the "Queen of African Song." A world renowned singer, she shared the stage with musical legends and sang for world leaders, including U.S. President John F. Kennedy. She will be missed by many the world over.

## Mark your Calendars!

**Bhutanese Presentation,  
December 10, 2008**

The VRRP Volunteer Office is hosting a cultural presentation. Please join us in welcoming speakers from the Bhutanese community in sharing their culture.

This will be a great opportunity to learn about Bhutanese and Nepali culture and bring any questions you have.

The event will be on December 10, 2008 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Community Room at the Fletcher Free Library in downtown Burlington.

Refreshments will be provided!

## Meet VRRP's New Staff Members: Shawna and Karin

*The new Americorps VISTA members share their experiences*

**Please join us in welcoming Shawna Wakeham to our staff as our new Americorps VISTA ELT Coordinator. Shawna is currently working with many students and in-home tutors.**

I never thought I could fall in love with a job. During my first year at Saint Michael's College I began to dream about working for the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program but remained in the mindset that this dream would never materialize. In May of 2007 I graduated from Saint Michael's College with a BA in Sociology/Anthropology and only a vague idea of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Needless to say, VRRP remained tucked away in the back of my mind.

A couple days after graduation I took my second trip to Kolkata, India. It was a trip full of contradictory experiences and confusing emotions that I still, a year and a half later, have not quite sorted out. A few months later I found a job and settled in for a while, but that unsettling feeling from Kolkata started rolling around again inside me. I wanted to travel. I wanted to

go back to school. I felt like I was looking at an exciting mix of dreams and possibilities pass by without even trying to catch them. The AmeriCorps VISTA position for the education department at VRRP could not have opened up at a more perfect time.

I'm hoping to squeeze everything I possibly can into the short year that I have here. Getting to know clients, their families and their experiences is by far the most fulfilling part of my job. I also love getting to know the sixty or so volunteers in our in-home tutoring program. Whether I am working with clients, volunteers, or VRRP's staff, I always seem to be surrounded by dynamic, passionate people. I must say, I really do not enjoy keeping track of tutor's hours but if this is my only complaint so far, I'm off to a pretty good start!

My goal for the year is to get glasses on every client that currently needs them and

hopefully set up a sustainable resource to purchase vouchers for glasses for every new arrival that may need them in the near future. English is a hard language to learn, but it must be nearly impossible if you can't see.

My first three months at VRRP have flown by and I only hope that in the following ten months I can have half as positive of an effect on VRRP and the local refugee community as they have already had on me.



*LtoR: Karin, Shawna*

**Meet Karin Johnson, our new Americorps VISTA Community Advancement Coordinator. Karin has been hard at work getting to know the many volunteers at VRRP and making sure all donations get in the warehouse!**

The journey that our clients at VRRP take to come to this little city in the Northeast is beyond my full comprehension as are the years of waiting patiently, then finally receiving a notice of resettlement to Burlington, Vermont, a place many cannot entirely visualize. Their journey is a long one in the making.

My journey to Burlington has been a long in the making as well. It is one that is geographical and psychological. I was born and raised in the diverse city of Sacramento, California. From there I jumped to Ohio to the College of Wooster to major in Sociology. It was at college that I opened myself up to world issues. After a semester in Cape Town, South Africa studying multiculturalism, my focus was set. Multiculturalism, identity and world issues were my main interests. A thought struck in my mind to work with refugees, which would provide the multicultural environment I sought.

So I continued east and made it to this

small city in Vermont. I came here almost as many refugees do. I trekked up to Burlington from the AmeriCorps Pre-Service Orientation in Philadelphia with two bags and no place to stay. Having a friendly network of AmeriCorps volunteers helped ease the crazy process. I see now that without the reception that VRRP provides to our clients, this new home would seem like a very scary place. AmeriCorps made this a friendly place for me, just as VRRP does for our clients.

Many times I have contemplated how difficult the experience of moving to a new city to start a job as a post-grad would be without the continued support the AmeriCorps network provides me. Without VRRP's network of volunteers from the greater Burlington community, I can't imagine how isolating the resettlement experience would be for our clients. The great commitment I have witnessed from VRRP volunteers is crucial to the well-being of our clients.

A large part of my work at VRRP is to assist with resettling refugees in their new homes and to provide support to volunteers. From matching up volunteers with arriving families to ensuring the families have food in their refrigerator to selecting the furniture that will go into their future

home, I find that I have become enveloped in the crucial stages involved with a family's initial months in this country.

My first three months at VRRP have flown by. Now that I feel I have gained my footing there are so many things I would like to accomplish in the year. This includes furthering a sense of community among volunteers, helping with new initiatives at VRRP to smooth the rather hectic and spur of the moment schedule.

One thing I have learned at VRRP is to always expect something new. With a new job I expected a calendar of meetings that I would need to attend. Now I find my calendar is full of names of people arriving with no meetings, but rather a required string of events that are starting to become second nature.

In addition, I cannot imagine how my first few months would have gone in a new city without my connections to the many Bhutanese families I have gotten to know. I almost instantly had mothers and fathers looking after me and inquiring about how I was. I have assisted them in many ways, but their warmth and opening of their homes to me has, without a doubt, eased my transition into a new city and a new job.

## BANGLADESH/MYANMAR- Bleak prospects for the Rohingya

*IRIN News*

COX'S BAZAR, 29 October 2008 (IRIN) - Thousands of Rohingya, Muslim residents from Myanmar's western Rakhine state, continue to languish in southern Bangladesh almost two decades after fleeing Myanmar.

"Our lives are miserable," said Mostafa Kamal outside his makeshift hut, not far from the coastal city of Cox's Bazar.

His family fled across the Naaf River, a natural boundary between the two countries, in 1992, and their prospects for returning look bleak. According to the laws of Myanmar, they are stateless.

"If the government changes inside Myanmar, I will return, but I'm not hopeful," the unemployed 22-year-old said.

There are more than 200,000 Rohingya living in Bangladesh today.

Many were persecuted and denied the right to religious freedom, property, as well as to marry or travel without permission, according to Amnesty International, an international watchdog.

Over more than five decades, there have been three major influxes of Rohingya into Bangladesh.

In the last campaign launched against them in July 1991, approximately one-third of this ethnic, linguistic and religious minority fled en masse, resulting in the establishment of 21 refugee camps in Bangladesh.

But their reception in Bangladesh, an impoverished nation struggling to provide for its own burgeoning population, has not always been welcome.

"They don't want us here. They have never wanted us here," said Mohammad Ismail, who has lived much of his life in Kutupalong refugee camp, one of two remaining government-administered camps about 40km south of Cox's Bazar.

Tensions between local residents and the refugees often erupt over issues of jobs or local resources such as wood and fish, the 21-year-old said.

About 28,000 documented refugees

remain, including 11,000 at Kutupalong and another 17,000 at a larger camp at Nayapara, farther south.

And while conditions inside the two camps remain grim, life for the estimated 200,000 outside the camps can be even worse.

Only documented refugees in the camps are provided regular food and non-food rations by the UN, as well as access to rudimentary health and informal primary school education.

### Undocumented Rohingya

Since 1992, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has not been allowed to register newly arriving Rohingya living outside the refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar District.

Many were part of the 1991 influx who had returned to Myanmar, only to once again flee to Bangladesh, at which point they were no longer documented.

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*photo by Karin Johnson*

### SWEETWATERS Shares the Holiday Spirit!

*by Marcia Stone*

**SWEETWATERS has extended a lovely invitation to our refugee families to come and enjoy a free traditional Thanksgiving meal at the restaurant!**

**For 18 years, the Church Street restaurant has been opening its doors on Thanksgiving Day to allow those in need to come together as a community for dinner, conversation and fun. More than 100 volunteers serve, cook and clean throughout the day, which includes a coat drive.**

**Those in need are invited to come to Sweetwaters between 11:30am and 4:00pm for a FREE THANKSGIVING MEAL! If you know of people who still need a coat or winter wear they are invited to come for a donation at 10:00am.**

**Sweetwaters will be collecting donations of baked goods, such as pies, cookies and cakes, or canned or boxed food from Monday through Thanksgiving morning at the restaurant.**

**If you would like to help serve dinner, cook or clean at the Thanksgiving Day gathering, contact Krysteen Romero at 864-9800 or [kromero@reelhospitality.com](mailto:kromero@reelhospitality.com). Please help us pass the word to our new Vermonters that could benefit from this wonderful gift from Sweetwaters!**

Coming to a New Land  
*Continued from page 2*

Father Dadhi Ram, mother Gangi Devi, Purushotum and daughters Indira and Madhavi. They lived in a bamboo hut in a refugee camp in Nepal. One day, in March of this year, a fire broke out in the camp, ravaging many of the shelters. Either through my inability to understand their English or their inability to understand my questions, I still haven't figured out whether the Nepals' home succumbed to the flames. But many families lost documents, school diplomas, the few possessions they had.

So the Nepal family is trying to find a better life in Vermont. Other friends who have left the refugee camp are scattered around the world. An uncle in Manchester, N.H. Two friends in Utah, another in Minnesota, another in Seattle. One in New Zealand. The family hopes other relatives still in the camp can join them in Vermont.

In the three and a half months since the family has arrived, I've watched them adjust to their new life. They can now

navigate a grocery store in search of the best deals. Madhavi attends school in Winooski. Purushotum works four days a week at Wal-Mart, grinding through a nearly two-hour commute by bus to Williston. He and Indira want to attend college. The family has befriended other Bhutanese refugees who live nearby.

I visited on a recent Saturday night, bringing leftover Halloween candy. Madhavi and a friend were watching an Indian DVD on a donated computer. While we watched, Dadhi Ram sat next to me on the couch, looking like he wanted to speak. Finally, he did, his voice full of frustration as he complained in broken English about the difficulty of finding a job in America.

"Dadhi Ram, no job. Ganga Devi, no job. Indira, no job. Purushotum, part-time job," he said.



I tried to explain the struggling economy and subsequent lack of job openings, and promised to bring a copy of the employment ads the next time I visited, unsure of how to respond to a man wondering how to take advantage of life in America.

*While VRRP's employment counselors here found work for many new arrivals, there are others who are eager to begin working and supporting their families. Employers agree that our clients are reliable and demonstrate an extraordinary work ethic. If you know of any job opportunities, please contact Employment Kristen McCaskey at 338-4625 or [knccaskey@usciwv.org](mailto:knccaskey@usciwv.org).*



### Bhutanese Celebrate the Nepali Dashain Festival

The Bhutanese community in Burlington came together to celebrate the Dashain festival that honors the Goddess Durga. It is an annual festival during the month of October and is an auspicious occasion. Above is a picture of the puja ceremony to Durga and was followed by the placing of Tikka on the forehead (pictured above right).

### A Family History *Continued from page 2*

The day I landed here in Vermont, I begin to feel like I got my second life, happiness knew no bounds, every day I ask myself how lucky I am. I am proud to call myself a resident of the United States. In my conversation with other colleagues in Nepal and other parts of the world, I proudly tell them that I am now in the United States, a place to call home. Back in Nepal, I lived in a refugee camp filled with dirt and smoke. Slept on the muddy floor and spent my 17 years like that. I had never dreamt that a refugee like me from Bhutan, one of the world's poorest countries, would ever become a resident of the US, the world's richest and most powerful country.

I know how poor people in Nepal and Bhutan dream to come to US, but they do not get such an opportunity. I am

truly lucky. Vermont is not only a heaven for me and for my parents, but for my future generation. There is no dirt, no smoke, no fear from rebels, thieves. It's so peaceful, calm and quiet. Vermont is a lovely place. People here are very friendly, helpful and kind unlike what I have seen and met in Nepal and Bhutan. Five months since my arrival here, I have already fallen in love with Vermont.

While I have presented Vermont as a heaven for me and my family, let me also share some of the challenges and hurdles we see for ourselves in this lovely city. First and foremost, my fear is what kind of jobs will I get? Will I get the job that I dream of? How do I pay my apartment rent if I don't get a job? Second, will there be any chance for me to continue my education which came to an end when I was expelled from Bhutan? Second, my parents speak no English. How will they communicate with others? Will they adjust to the society here? Will they ever learn English? These are my bottom-line concerns at the moment. And whose answers I hope to hear from you all...

Thank you.

**Myanmar Refugees**  
*Continued from page 5*

In 2007, however, UNHCR successfully negotiated with the government to relocate on humanitarian grounds about 9,000 unregistered Rohingya living in squalid and dangerous conditions along the banks of a tidal river in the border town of Teknaf to a safer site in Leda, about 3km from Nayapara.

The move was facilitated by Islamic Relief in mid-2008 after the agency constructed the new site with the support of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Most undocumented Rohingya, however, continue to live in surrounding villages and towns, or with the local population.

**A lasting solution**

Ideally, both the government of Bangladesh and UNHCR consider repatriation the most durable solution; it is also the long-term goal of most refugees.

"These refugees can only go back when conditions inside Myanmar are conducive and when they themselves feel it is safe to do so," Stephan Sinclair-Loutit, head of UNHCR's sub-office in Cox's Bazar, told IRIN.

A nominal third-country resettlement programme established in 2005, typically to Canada, was slowly expanding, but remained an option for only a limited few.

In the interim, UNHCR and its partners are working towards improving education and vocational training opportunities within the camps, with the hope of empowering camp residents - making them less dependent on outside assistance, allowing them greater mobility and the opportunity to work outside the camps



*courtesy IRIN News*

legally.

Although the authorities generally turn a blind eye to those being employed outside, it was time to make that official, Sinclair-Loutit said.

"We would like them to be able to leave the camps freely. Freedom of movement and freedom of work not just in fact, but in rule," he said.



**Big Thank You's to our Organizing Volunteers!**

Thankyou to the University of Vermont's College of Medicine students for coming to volunteer at VRRP for their annual COM Care's Day (shown at left). Their help with organizing our linen closet and warehouse has greatly helped with the process of gathering much needed items for our recent arrivals! Many great students crowded our upstairs conference room folding towels and sheets and a few out in the warehouse helped organize all the kitchen items so we can find them easily for our welcome kits! Thank you!

Another thank you to many of our Bhutanese clients (shown at right). They have come in numerous times to help sort the many winter clothes that have come into our office. We wouldn't be able to find the right size jacket without them! Thank you! Dhanyabhad! Namaste!

Out of a Crack

*Continued from page 1*

is something that many Americans may have forgotten about. Perhaps this is something that you can teach us by modeling it for us.”

I see this being modeled every day by former refugees. One of our first Bhutanese arrivals got a job at a restaurant washing dishes. He’d grown up in a refugee camp in Nepal where he’d always been a student. After he finished high school he had nothing to do (the refugees in most camps are not permitted to work) and he tried to continue his studies of philosophy and music on his own. But he’d never had a job before coming to Vermont. I called him after his first day of work and he was delighted with it but, two days later, after the training period was over and he had to do the job on his own, he called his employment counselor to say that he had to quit – the job was a nightmare. The supervisor and co-workers were constantly yelling in rude ways, the kitchen was hot and noisy, and he couldn’t keep up with all the work that had to be done.

His employment counselor and his case manager sat down with him. They each told him about their first jobs in the U.S., and how those jobs had seemed like a nightmare to each of them. But they

needed income to survive so they kept on working. They found that they got used to the pace and could keep up. They even got used to Americans yelling at each other without getting offended. And, when they found better jobs, they quit and learned that their supervisors were very sorry to see them go.

This young man has now been working for several months. He’s received a promotion so that he’s now doing some food preparation along with the dish-washing. Most importantly, he is counseling the more recently arrived people in his community. When they start a new job and are shocked by how aggressively their supervisor barks out orders, he explains that the supervisor isn’t trying to offend – that’s just how they talk. When new employees tell him that they’re afraid they don’t have the physical strength to do physical labor eight hours a day, he tells them how he had to build his muscles and his stamina. They hear in his voice that he’s proud of building himself up and it encourages them. His example will set the standard for them so that they, in turn, can be mentors for others.

Another client of ours had surgery a few months ago. Afterwards, I called the family to ask how he was and they invited me to visit him at home. I was reluctant to disturb him but they were quit insistent so I stopped by for a few min-

utes. I found I wasn’t the only one – there was a roomful of visitors. They had moved his bed into the living room so he could be surrounded by family and friends. He was still in some pain and, after a while, he pulled the sheet over his head and slept. Everyone else talked over and around him with no regard to the possibility of disturbing him. Weeks later, I asked him if he’d been able to get any rest at all with all those people there. He said that it was the best sleep ever. Knowing that everyone cared about him, everyone was there for him, was the most powerful healing force he could have had.

Those of us who have the privilege to get to know these courageous people who come to our country as refugees have an opportunity to learn what we can from them. During the tough times that we’re going through now, perhaps it’s a responsibility as well as an opportunity to learn as much as we can about how caring about and for each other makes us all stronger people.

I feel proud and fortunate to be independent and self-reliant. I’ve passed those qualities on to my children just as my parents passed them on to me. Still, in harder economic and international times, I don’t believe they will be enough. We will need to learn and remember that we is the most important word in “yes, we can.”

## VRRP STAFF PHONE DIRECTORY

**Please join us in welcoming two new staff members to VRRP.**

**Kristen McCaskey is our new Employment Counselor. She is hard at work finding much needed jobs for our clients!**

**ChiengKuach Mabil has filled a new position at VRRP. He is the new Americorps State and National Community Access and Engagement Assistant. He will be assisting case management with client needs.**

ChiengKuach Mabil	Americorps Community Engagement	802-338-4618
Fatuma Bulle	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1706
Htun Sein	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1728
Jacqueline Rose	Coordinator of Interpreting Services	802-654-1706
Judy Scott	Director	802-654-1700
Karin Johnson	AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer Office	802-338-4632
Kristen McCaskey	Employment Counselour	802-338-4625
Loan Nguyen	Financial Support Specialist	802-654-1701
Marcia Stone	Coordinator of Volunteer Services	802-338-4627
Matt Thompson	Coordinator of Programs	802-338-4625
Melissa Lang	ELT Coordinator	802-654-1704
Mukiza Noel	Case Manager	802-338-4617
Nada Popovac	Front Office Manager	802-655-1963
Ongyel Sherpa	Employment Counselor	802-654-1717
Rashid Hussein	Senior Case Manager	802-654-1707
Shawna Wakeham	AmeriCorps*VISTA ELT Office	802-655-2656
Supriya Serchan	Case Manager	802-654-1716
Tam Truong	Accountant	802-654-1733
Volunteers and Interns	Volunteer Office	802-338-4633
Wendy Reid	Relationship Enrichment Coordinator	802-338-1860

*e-mail addresses follow this pattern: Marcia Stone = mstone@uscrvt.org (Exception: Volunteer Office = volunteer@uscrvt.org)*

# community buzz

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

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

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

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

Thank you to Greg Duggan for his contribution this month!

## Knitting Group Formed!

The women in the Bhutanese community have started a knitting group! The women meet once a week to come together and knit. They are currently knitting hats, scarves, mittens and socks.

## Volunteer Orientation

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

In **December**, orientations are being held every **Thursday** from **5:30 to 7:00 p.m.**

We look forward to seeing you there!

If you have any questions contact Karin at 338-4632

## Learn Nepali!

Here are some basic Nepali phrases that you can use!

Namaste: Hello/Greeting, I  
bless the divine in you

(Tapaiilai)

Kasto Cha?: How are you?

Hanna: Food

Addressing people:

Anne-Marie-ji: Use name, end with ji

## December Presentation on the Bhutanese Culture

Remember to mark your calendars for our presentation at the Fletcher Free Library located at 235 College Street in downtown Burlington on Wednesday December 10, 2008 at 6 p.m.

Come with a curiosity about Bhutanese culture as well as any questions you have about VRRP. Volunteers are encouraged to attend.

Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program

462 Hegeman Ave, Ste 101, Colchester, VT 05446

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

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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.)