

Resources for Refugee Support: A Short Guide

Compiled by the Center for Community Engagement, Lehigh University

As many of you know, Lehigh has a longstanding relationship with refugee resettlement in the Lehigh Valley. Through our work together, we have enjoyed a reciprocally empowering and educational partnership. We have provided tutoring and counseling for new neighbors, co-created documentaries, raised emergency funds for local families, and organized large events to raise awareness and promote dialogue. Our students, faculty, and staff have learned so much through this partnership, and have grown in humility, responsibility, and active citizenship.

Current efforts:

- The No Lost Generation student club will be embarking on a semester of programming to raise awareness and provide tangible ways in which the community can support our local refugee partner. (Contact: Katie Morris)
 - Link: NLG on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/NoLostGenerationLehigh/>
- We have a public service intern placed at Bethany Christian Services (Resettlement Agency) from the College of Business who is working on business and support plans. (Contact: Sarah Stanlick)
- There will be a series of workshops created by a team from the College of Education and members of the No Lost Generation student group aimed at strengthening skills of teachers and community members to support refugees in the area. (Contact: Alexander Wiseman or Lisa Damaschke-Dietrick)
- The film "After Spring" will be shown on March 21st as part of the Mellon Digital Humanities Initiative's Migration Film Series. (Contact: Michael Kramp or Nick Sawicki)
 - Link: MDHI Website - https://digital_humanities.cas2.lehigh.edu/
- Gryphons have reached out to ask for speakers and the living communities on campus will be discussing refugee resettlement (Contact: Sarah Stanlick)
- We have been asked to help support a local refugee family of 8, with 6 children in the Bethlehem Area School District. The three youngest children are participating in Homework Club (run by the Community Service Office) and the three oldest will have one-to-one mentoring and tutoring (Contact: Sarah Stanlick)

Three main needs are at the forefront now:

- Advocacy & Awareness Raising
- Showing Up and Standing Up
- Public Education

There are talented individuals doing direct service, but the larger issue is misinformation, fear, and policy decisions that are hurting our neighbors and our work. With this in mind, the following is a compilation of resources and guidance that have been particularly helpful.

Advocacy and Awareness Raising: Guidance from the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

It is clear that a high percentage of Americans have been misinformed, as they believe that refugees do not care about this country, nor do they share "American values". It's our

responsibility to engage those Americans in conversation, and begin to educate them. We need to show them that refugees are not a drain on America, but bring immeasurable value to this country. We know that refugees not only bring value to America, but they unconditionally love this country, and will defend America as if they were born here—we need to reinforce this message, and change the conversation.

The campaign for awareness by LIRS is currently active. It may be a lot to absorb with everything else that is happening right now, so we will try to make it as easy as possible to use. Below you will find specifics with sample social media messages.

Here are the first three videos. There are seven more in production.

- AJ: <https://vimeo.com/200830745>
- Alex: <https://vimeo.com/200830779>
- Chan: <https://vimeo.com/200830812>

Please engage staff, Board, volunteers, refugees, churches, and donors! Use the videos with email/Facebook/Twitter, create your own content (make short videos and share other folks videos), request action (ask for Congress and the Administration to be reminded that Refugees Love America)! Use #refugeeswelcome

And the initial advocacy actions are listed here: <http://www.rcusa.org/refugees-love-america>

Social Media

- Make three to four social media posts on EACH of your social media outlets
- Sample posts for Facebook:
 - Post #1: A must watch video of Alex. The son of refugees who made America their home, and instilled a sense of pride and duty into their children. <https://vimeo.com/200830779> Become part of the conversation and take action. <http://www.rcusa.org/refugees-love-america> #refugeeswelcome
 - Post #2: We all have an “American Dream”. Watch this video and see how Chan’s is not so different from yours. <https://vimeo.com/200830812> Become part of the conversation <http://www.rcusa.org/refugees-love-america> #refugeeswelcome
 - Post #3: AJ’s story may start out a little different from yours, but we bet he loves this country just as much as you. Watch this video learn more about AJ, and how much he loves America. <https://vimeo.com/200830745> Become part of the conversation. <http://www.rcusa.org/refugees-love-america> #refugeeswelcome
- Sample posts for Twitter:
 - Alex Post #1: Alex, the son of refugees who instilled a sense of pride and duty into their children. <https://vimeo.com/200830779> #refugeeswelcome
 - Alex Post #2: Listen to Alex’s story, and discover why the son of refugees defends America. <https://vimeo.com/200830779> #refugeeswelcome
 - Chan Post #1: See how Chan’s American dream is not so different from yours. <https://vimeo.com/200830812> Join the conversation. #refugeeswelcome
 - Chan Post #2: Listen to Chan’s story, and discover her American dream. <https://vimeo.com/200830812> Join the conversation #refugeeswelcome
 - AJ Post #1: Listen to AJ, you can just hear his love for the country he now calls home. <https://vimeo.com/200830745> #refugeeswelcome

- AJ Post #2: At the age of 6 AJ & his family escaped to America. Hear why he loves this country. <https://vimeo.com/200830745> #refugeeswelcome

Email

- **SEND ONE EMAIL.** Using the three sample videos sent, choose ONE and email your audience using existing lists of supporters, donors, volunteers, etc.
 - Include a brief description of the video, for example:
 - “A must watch video of Alex. The son of refugees who made America their home, and instilled a sense of pride and duty into their children. Become part of the conversation at #refugeeswelcome “
 - No calls to action in first email but ask them to watch the video
 - Include link to Refugee Council USA page at <http://www.rcusa.org/refugees-love-america>
- Days later, **send a follow up email** to those who did not open the first email. Change the subject line to help improve the open rate. The body copy of the email can remain the same, as they did not open the first.
 - If possible, include names in the subject line. For example: “Laura, will you help refugees in your community?”
- **Send a second, follow-up email** including statistics or educational information relevant to refugees loving America. This time ask them to contact Congress and the Administration to express their support for refugees.
 - Examples: Economic success stories in your city, such as refugees opening a local business; Stories about refugees wanting to learn English; The dreams of refugees after they arrive in America; Examples of refugees giving back to the community through service; Refugees and other citizens befriending each other in neighborhoods or schools, etc.

Showing Up and Standing Up

Seek out events in the Lehigh Valley that are intended to bring people together across differences. For instance, this weekend, the Muslim Association of the Lehigh Valley held an Open House to welcome members of the community to learn more. On Tuesday, an interfaith prayer space will be dedicated in Fairchild-Martindale library at 4:00 PM.

Simple kindness and making an effort beyond your daily routine seems small, but can have incredible ripple effects. Standing next to someone who is the subject of hateful rhetoric or attending a large community gathering in support of those neighbors in the most vulnerable positions will speak volumes.

Want to stand by someone in solidarity but nervous about your preparation? For a step-by-step guide on how to respond to Islamophobia happening in front of you, I have found that this is a helpful process guide: <http://static02.mediaite.com/themarysue/uploads/2016/09/harassment-guide.png>

Public Education

Beyond advocacy and awareness-raising, there is space to create intentional efforts to become more knowledgeable – ourselves and in partnership with the community – about refugee issues. For instance, in the Spring, a team from the College of Education and the No Lost Generation student club will be holding workshops for teachers and service providers on the unique needs

of refugees. The Mellon Digital Humanities Initiative will be screening “After Spring” in March and hosting a panel discussion to discuss refugee issues and educate our community. The Council for Equity and Community will be hosting dialogues such as Tackling Tough Topics Together and a dinner series on the Principles of an Equitable Community throughout the semester to bring individuals together to talk about our most difficult, but necessary, challenges facing our nation.

Think about spaces where you can create or support that type of programming and invite dialogue across borders. And invite community members – welcoming and valuing our neighbors as thought partners is key.

As Parker Palmer reminds us, “The more you know about another person's story, the less possible it is to see that person as your enemy.”

Remember:

- Contacting officials for concern and for praise are **both** important. Pennsylvania has been ahead of the curve on refugee resettlement, and our Governor and Representatives/Senators have been supporters. Just as you would with something that is going wrong, if you see something going right, say something. Letters, calls, and social media outreach are all appreciated.
- Lehigh ascribes to a philosophy of asset-based, democratic partnership in all of our community engagement. Remember that our partners are competent, compassionate professionals and experts in what they do. We have a talented team at the state and local level who are directly working with refugees. Support, care, amplifying their message, while affirming their expertise, is tremendously important and empowering.
- If you have any events to publicize, please feel free to email us to help market/publicize events on our calendar. In addition, we can host groups up to 25 people in Williams 020 and are happy to provide the space.
- Keep up with the news and stay informed. As you know, we are living in a tenuous time when it comes to media and journalism. There is competing and sometimes conflicting reports portrayed in different news sources. Seek out information from a variety of reliable sources and encourage your students to do the same.
- Reach out and connect with the Center for Community Engagement – we can do more together and be more effective in partnership. This work is not new to us, but the interest and passion is on the rise, and that is a terrific sign for the future.