

Refugee Resettlement Organization Celebrates 3-Year Milestone Helping Immigrants Assimilate in 30-Plus States

One Former Refugee's Plan to 'Pay it Forward'

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, August 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Amid contentious debates over immigration in the United States, one Boston-based organization is

celebrating an important refugee-related milestone: three years of engaging more than 4,000 Americans in 30 states to resettle families from Mexico, Ukraine, Haiti, Venezuela, and many other countries.



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*Elizabeth Davis-Edwards,
founder and CEO of
WelcomeNST*

[WelcomeNST](#) engages with communities to form Neighborhood Support Teams sponsoring and welcoming refugee families to the U.S.

"We are living in a difficult stretch of American history, particularly concerning immigration," says WelcomeNST Founder and CEO Elizabeth Davis-Edwards. "Yet the

historical arc of America tends to broaden, as Mom always taught us around the dinner table to 'make room for one more.' Many Americans recognize this as a core value that binds us as a people and defines us as a nation. It is part of our covenant to build and share the American Dream."

In August 2021, in response to the evacuation of 75,000 Afghan refugees from Afghanistan, Davis-Edwards, a long-time advocate for refugees, quit her job as a marketing executive and formed WelcomeNST to engage communities to help resettle refugee families. More broadly, she dreamed of pioneering a community-powered model for refugee resettlement.

That dream has come true for many people, including Tom and Mandi Fobert, who earlier this year joined hands with friends and family in Denver to welcome a family of five from Guatemala.

"WelcomeNST is really what made our experience possible," says Mandi. "I'm so thankful for what they do and how passionate they are helping refugees. They walked us through the whole

process, and were there every step of the way to answer questions and offer support.”

That process is based on a grassroots model enabling regular Americans to connect with others in their communities – neighbors, fellow churchgoers, friends, and family members – to rescue endangered families abroad, offering sanctuary in their neighborhoods, and walking alongside refugees on their road to self-sufficiency. They begin by recruiting team members and raising the necessary funds to support a family’s resettlement. WelcomeNST asks that all teams commit to a sponsorship period six to 12 months, the typical amount of time it takes for a refugee family to become self-sufficient.

Another WelcomeNST client, Hermann Mputu, personally knows the plight of refugees. In 2006, he left persecution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and resettled in Ohio. After 18 years and establishing himself as a husband, father, pastor, and technology professional, he wants to help other refugees.

“I do not care where the refugee family is from,” says Mputu, who turns 50 in September. “This is my calling. Helping people.”

Davis-Edwards believes his commitment and determination are both heroic and inspiring.

“In a world of dividing lines and pointed fingers, Hermann’s story exemplifies survival, faith, kindness, and sacrifice for the greater good, reminding us that to give is truly to receive,” she says.

Faith underscores Mputu’s commitment to helping resettle refugees.

His five-member neighborhood support team is composed of people from the Hand of God Church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation he pastors in Hamilton, Ohio. They also fled the strife, injustice, and violence prevalent in the DRC.

“All of us know the hardships refugees face, especially arriving in a country unfamiliar with the culture, the language, and the simple basics of living, like establishing a bank account and getting a driver’s license,” Mputu says. “That’s why collaborating with WelcomeNST is important. They are helping our team step-by-step so that we’re ready when the opportunity arises to welcome a refugee family to Ohio, and help ensure a smooth transition for them.”

That help includes working with him to access funding from grants, available through August 31, from Welcome Corps, the U.S. State Department office that assists in private resettlement.

Like others who have worked with WelcomeNST, it’s likely Mputu’s wife and their four children ages 6 to 17 will also play roles in welcoming a refugee family. Children assist in making signs to welcome the refugee family’s arrival, as well as helping shop for clothes, food, and other essentials. They also help refugee children assimilate into the local school system.

“Resettling refugees can – and should – involve the whole family of NST members,” says Davis-Edwards. “The experience can be life-changing for families, as together they walk shoulder to shoulder with refugee families, enhancing their own understanding and appreciation of this global human struggle and the privileges and freedoms we have in the United States.”

Such efforts are especially needed in a time of division over how, or even if, to help newcomers to the United States.

“I am an immigrant,” Mputu says. “I know the difficulties immigrants face when they arrive in the United States. I was so grateful for the kindness shown to me when I arrived in the U.S. 18 years ago. Now, I am excited to ‘pay it forward’ and help welcome a new family in my community.”

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