



# Interfaith Refugee Ministry

An Affiliate of Episcopal Migration Ministries

*Dedicated to helping refugees rebuild their lives in Eastern NC*

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Find Us on Social Media

- [Helpingrefugees.org](http://Helpingrefugees.org)
- Facebook: [Interfaith Refugee Ministry](#)
- Instagram [@irmnewbern](#)

## A note from the Director

For 32 years, IRM has welcomed over 3400 refugees, providing the essential support they need to become independent members of our community. This support has included housing, food, English classes, medical appointments, and job readiness training during their first 90 days in the U.S. We have carried out this work in partnership with the federal government, assisting fully vetted refugees through official contracts.

However, on January 20, President Trump paused new refugee arrivals, and on February 27, all federal contracts for new arrivals were canceled. As a result, the U.S. refugee admissions program, which has been in place since 1980, is now effectively dismantled.

Despite these challenges, IRM remains committed to assisting the 93 individuals who have arrived since October 1, as well as the record 273 refugees who arrived in FY24. These families came with the assurance that the U.S. refugee program would provide support as they worked toward financial independence. Unfortunately, congressionally allocated funds remain unavailable, leaving us uncertain about future funding for these critical services.

We have been awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Shapiro foundation who will match it dollar for dollar. We also have our main fundraiser Dinner on 5 Continents coming up on March 15th and tickets are still available. You can call the office or go to our website to make a reservation. The New Bern community has always provided support with volunteers and donations. The encouragement from our community, means more than ever.

We are also in need of more volunteers to help these families with more English practice, financial literacy, digital literacy, and other life skills as they integrate into our community. Introduce them to our parks, the library, help them learn to use CARTs. You do not need to speak the language, or have special training. We will fully support volunteers as their role is even more important.

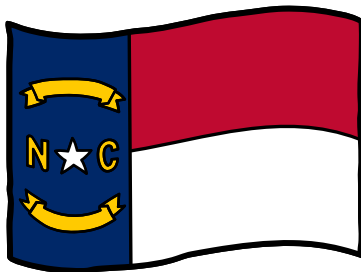
Debi Miller, Executive Director

## Staff Spotlight

**Craven County School Teacher Kathleen Brinson Selected as a North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) "Learning Happens Here Teacher Ambassador"**

Ambassadors will collaborate with DNCR to champion innovative, experiential, and place-based learning that connects classrooms with North Carolina's rich cultural, historical, and natural resources. Ambassador Kathleen Brinson, who is a Craven County Schools English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher, looks forward to this exciting opportunity: "This opportunity will allow me to engage with educators, learn from them, and exchange knowledge regarding the diverse educational institutions and resources offered by the DNCR across North Carolina."

Kathleen Brinson is an ESOL Teacher and also works at IRM as their **Refugee School Impact Coordinator (RSI)** within Craven County Schools. With 19 years of teaching experience, she has instructed students across various grades. As the RSI Coordinator, Kathleen is a liaison between IRM, the school system, refugee families, and students. The RSI Program provides linguistically appropriate services, increases family engagement in student's educational experience, supports behavioral health interventions, implements tutoring programs and summer activities, and supports interventions for refugee children's various learning needs.



## Volunteer Spotlight

**Thank you to Pat Dixon for sharing her volunteer story.**

"I'm going to share with you a little bit of history along with the journey that led me wanting to help new refugees. It all started back in 2005 when I was the communicable disease nurse for Craven County. During the summer of that year we were notified that we would need to "process" approximately 150 refugees from overseas for the Federal government in the coming year. That process meant giving each a complete physical, identifying any issues that would require referrals to a specialist, and making sure that all received TB testing and all required vaccinations.

This fell to me to be completed. It was during my interactions (and thru an interpreter) with them that I learned their individual experiences of what they had suffered thru, and sacrificed, to be able to come to a safe country and start a new life with their families. I was in awe of the courage, strength, and strong religious belief that allowed them to follow their dream of establishing a new beginning.

After I retired from the health department in 2012, I contacted IRM expressing a desire to continue helping as a volunteer. Susan Husson found a new spot for me. She needed someone to go out to client homes, show the women how to set up and use their kitchens, and teach food safety. I did this for several years before I had to step back due to medical issues. I have recently returned to IRM to offer my help. I am currently teaching ESL classes. The refugees will always hold a special part in my heart. I always enjoy working & helping them."



# Community activity

First Presbyterian's Welcome Team partnered again with IRM to welcome an arriving family. The family of four includes a husband and wife, and their two children. They arrived on January 14th and were met at the airport by a few members of the team who brought them back to the apartment that other church members had furnished for the family. Since then members of the team have taken the family to Goodwill for warm clothing, shown them how to grocery shop including a trip to Lupita's Kitchen for some Central American foods. The team has started English classes, and are getting to know their new community. Below are some photos the church shared from the airport greeting and apartment set-up.

Welcome Teams like First Presbyterian are a blessing to our staff but an even bigger blessing to the family as they learn about their new community. If you have a group of people who might be interested in mentoring a family that is already here as they learn about life here in New Bern please contact Amanda Norwood at 252-349-9411 or [anorwood@helpingrefugees.org](mailto:anorwood@helpingrefugees.org)



Kitchen necessities



Welcome to New Bern



Stocking the pantry

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## Thank you to the Tryon Civitans!



Every year Tryon Civitans bring us household necessities for arriving families. We are so thankful for their continued support.

# Other Ways to Help

## Most Needed Donations

Laundry soap

Dish soap

Household cleaners

Personal care items

Paper towels and toilet paper

# Volunteers Needed

- Teach ESL and or Cultural Orientation one-on-one (we will train)
- Help with digital literacy
- Transport people to appointments
- Provide conversational practice to clients with some English skills
- Mentor a client or family, provide friendship and assistance as they settle into life in Eastern NC
- Help clients learn to use local transportation

click **[HERE](#)** for our online volunteer interest form for other possibilities or reach out to Amanda Norwood for more information on these or other opportunities.  
[anorwood@helpingrefugees.org](mailto:anorwood@helpingrefugees.org)