



Keeping Our Promise Inc.

888 Pittsford Mendon Center Rd. • Pittsford • NY • 14534 / 585-721-3211

2020 Annual Report



Keeping Our Promise Inc. provides comprehensive resettlement assistance to endangered wartime allies who served U.S. interests in conflict and war zones.

www.KeepingOurPromise.org | EIN 85-1918996

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Mission

To provide comprehensive resettlement assistance to endangered wartime allies who served U.S. interests in conflict and war zones.



Keeping Our Promise Inc.

What We Do



Keeping Our Promise Inc. offers a comprehensive resettlement support program for Afghan, Iraqi and Kurds in the greater Rochester, NY region who served the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our services include assisting with visa applications under the Special Immigrant Visa program; helping a family safely and legally leave their country if they are under an immediate threat; find and furnish our allies' first apartments in the Rochester area; purchase their first food and groceries; assist with employment searches; and, offer a modest vehicle to get to work. Caring Circles help fully integrate families into their new lives so they can quickly become contributing members of the Rochester, NY community.

Over the last 6 years we have been able to assist 365 Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazara, Turkmen and Nuristanis from Afghanistan, Sunni and Shia Iraqis, as well as Kurdish allies who now call Rochester home. We also assisted 15 others from Afghanistan to find support in other U.S. cities.

Our Values:

Empowerment
Community
Transparency
Dedication
Wholeheartedness

A Message From Our Director



Ellen Smith, Director

Dear friends and supporters,

Thank you. Despite all odds, we pulled through 2020. We worked together and pulled through a world-wide pandemic.

We did it. You did it. All 414 of us. Together. Despite all odds. It has been such a hard year, but we made it through. Vaccines are on the way. We can start breathing a collective sigh of relief, as long as we have our masks on and wash our hands, and maintain some physical distance.

Despite a world-wide pandemic, you helped 10 families – 44 men, women and children – start their new lives in Rochester free from the Taliban and ISIL (14 families if we are using the federal fiscal year of Oct. 1 - Sept. 30). You helped with frequent flyer miles to get families out of Afghanistan when flights were available. You fed them. You housed them. You clothed them. Through masks, social distancing, lots of emails and phone calls, you showed you cared, and you were there.

It is a year I never want to go through again, but it is a year that renewed my faith. It was a year that was hard on volunteers and SIV families, but we learned so much.

On March 11, 2020, exactly one week before our Annual Spring Dinner, we all learned that the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a world-wide pandemic. We did not understand exactly how deadly COVID could be, but that news cemented what we needed to do.

We cancelled our dinner scheduled at Temple B'rith Kodesh. Ticket sales for our event were used to support our SIV families. Our dinner auction went on-line. And while the community was feeling a bit bewildered and battered, we stuck together with phone calls, and zoom meeting, and door-drops or curbside pickups for food and hygiene items so no one would fall through the cracks. We had help from supporters afar as well as the United Way of Greater Rochester and the ESL Foundation.

We had to cancel our horse program, and summer camp, but eventually camp and horse back riding will come back.

It is hard to place into words my gratitude for our 414 volunteers, 395 financial donors, SIVs and community partners who have formed bonds of friendship and commitment to make this all work as **Keeping Our Promise**.

You are all doing tremendous good, even through this year of a global pandemic when we all seemed to be stretched beyond our capacities and capabilities. Families still continue to arrive. You continue to help. We are all working together. As a country, we made a promise to those Afghans and Iraqis who supported us against the Taliban and ISIL. Thank you for joining together in dedication and **Keeping Our Promise**. I look forward to the day when I can again see you all again in person. unmasked, with handshakes and hugs.

Ellen Smith

February 2, 2021

2020 Program Highlights

10 Families Resettled in the Rochester region totaling 44 individuals.*

* If we use federal fiscal year numbers, we resettled 14 families totaling 46 individuals. Visa approvals were halted due to Covid, but many with visas as of March still made it to Rochester and the U.S.

25 Emergency Flight Tickets

Thanks to those who donated frequent flyer miles to our partner **Miles4Migrants**, we were able to secure emergency flights and airline tickets for a total of 25 individuals who were in immediate danger of Taliban or ISIL reprisal. Of these families, 17 of the individuals came to Rochester. One family joined friends in Philadelphia, and another SIV family resettled in Boston with help from a soldier with whom the interpreter served with in Afghanistan (see photo right). Each ticket out of Kabul requires 45,000 “miles.” A total of 1.125 MILLION miles were donated to help!

Visa Advocacy

Thirteen families were assisted through our visa advocacy program. Babies born in Afghanistan could not get visas, since the Embassy was closed. Families with expiring visas were left in an untenable position of having to leave behind their infants and mothers, or not being able to come to the U.S. Families were assisted through help from Congressman Joe Morelle, the International Refugee Assistance Project, and Miles4Migrants.

Apartments Furnished

We fully furnished all apartments for each family for free thanks to donations from the local community and help from a furniture grant from the Church of Latter Day Saints. LDS also gave us a grant of \$1,400 to cover gas for our van used to pick up and deliver donations.



Jamil and his family (above), as well as the Hassan and his family, left Kunduz Province as soon as we could get emergency flights from Miles4Migrants.



Afghanistan War Veteran Marc Silvestri (right) greeted his former interpreter, Sibghatullah Nooristani, as he arrived at Logan Airport. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF. KOP worked with M4M to get tickets for the Nooristani family.



All apartments and houses were completely furnished by community donations and a grant from LDS.



Gail Richeson and Barb Muller keep the linen donations clean and ready to distribute with help from the First Presbyterian Church of Honeoye Falls.



Susan Jay has gifted each family a hand made quilt. Each red, white and blue quilt is a different pattern and an heirloom gift thanking each SIV for his or her service. Arlene Riser made quilts for the children.

20 Food Baskets Every Month, And A Ton of Food!

Every month Asbury Methodist Church provided 20 food baskets for our most vulnerable families who rely totally on SNAP.

When New York went into the “lock-down” in March and April, KOP had requests for emergency assistance from SIV families who suddenly became unemployed, and needed some form of assistance. KOP was the “safety net” for 41 families who needed some type of assistance because of Covid job loss. Many families who arrived within the last year (2019) were caught in the gap between unemployment and the “pandemic” unemployment program, and had not received “stimulus payments” from the government. At this same time the availability of our volunteers plummeted.



Donations from the Latter Day Saints, Hearts & Homes for Refugees, Interfaith Council of New Americans, individual donors, and a grant from the United Way helped with food gift cards, rent support, phone bills, electric bills, one-time car insurance payments that were due (necessary so a family would not lose their car).



The LDS Church from Palmyra donated a 1 ton of food, and Asbury First United Methodist Church stored it for KOP.

Surviving the Pandemic



Samim Rahimi was only here for 6 weeks when the pandemic struck. He was hired by Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services to make masks and medical clothing.



Judy Cohen made masks for our community, and made sure that every SIV child had a washable mask to wear.



Devon Holland donated 120 spray bottles, and Terry Schwartz filled each one with diluted bleach solution to give to each family for home disinfecting.



R-Community Bikes continues to offer bicycles to each SIV family, but we now get bikes in bulk to limit in-person exposure.



Families needed supplies available through our LDS grant. Volunteers coordinated pickups where hygiene items could be placed into the trunks of SIV or volunteer's cars.



17 “Wheels for Work” Car Grants



Zaman Rahmani: 300+ hours



Sami Maroff: 100+ hours



Ghafoor Yousufzai: 100+ hours



Sami Skander: 200+ hours

Seventeen families earned their Wheels for Work in 2020! SIVs had to log a minimum of 50 hours of community service, have their license and employment in order to qualify for a **Keeping Our Promise** car grant. Those who lost their jobs because of the pandemic, but had cars through our program, were able to pick up work with Amazon Flex, Grub Hub, Door Dash and Uber Eats serving our community. We would like to recognize Zaman Rahmani who logged

over 300 hours of volunteer time, Sami Skander who logged over 200 hours, and Sami Maroff and Ghafoor Yousufzai who each logged over 100 hours in volunteer time helping the community.



**Greenovation
Furniture Donation
Partner**

Donation Partnership with Greenovation

Since 2014 Ellen Smith has used her farmhouse, garage and small hay barn to store donations for our families, and for two years we were granted a storage locker. In February, KOP entered into a partnership with the not-for-profit thrift and salvage store **Greenovation** for donation management. KOP gets a large, dedicated storage and office space in exchange for volunteers running the Greenovation store on Saturdays. In addition, KOP can accept items we would typically turn down – such a large furniture pieces – and sell these items the Greenovation store to help support our program. Greenovation also helps fill in missing items for our families for free, and

offers 25% discounts to our KOP volunteers who assist at the store. We welcome everyone to visit. Masks, hand-sanitizer is mandatory upon entry.



Some of the many SIVs who helped organize the space at Greenovation!

35 school supply bags were given out in August thanks to supplies offered by Tree Town Café, Chandee Searcy & family offering their yard for bag assembly, and volunteers Nancy Westendorf and Judy Weiner.



The summer of 2020 was one of the hottest in Rochester's history with temperatures of 97F. We gave out a total of 40 fans that were purchased or donated.



37 first aid kits and thermometers donated for incoming SIVs!
Keeping Our Promise Inc.

Each family has a first aid kit and a thermometer as part of their "welcome basket." We also offered first aid kits to any SIV family who requested a kit.

Why Rochester?

Rochester is one of 25 cities chosen by the U.S. State Dept. for SIV resettlement, and one of three cities slated in New York for resettlement. The other two cities are Buffalo and Albany. Total numbers are not available for 2020, but in 2019 we resettled 47% of the SIV population for New York.

Tools For Every Family



You donated \$1,400 on Dec. 1, “**Giving Toolsday**,” so each family has the gift of a simple, yet empowering tool kit. We assisted four SIVs with grants through **Saints Place** where SIVs needed specific tools for their trades and new jobs as electricians and carpenters as required by their employers.

Changing Residency Requirements for SIVs and Refugees

**REJECTED:
ONE YEAR
OF RESIDENCY
REQUIRED**

While **Keeping Our Promise** volunteers make every effort to offer each family a holistic resettlement experience, and help the head of household get on a career path, there are some issues we cannot work around such as career training and education barriers because of state rules and regulations.

SIVs are not considered New York state residents during their first year in Rochester, precluding them from entering into SUNY programs for technical certification. If they choose to attend school they must pay out of state tuition. For instance, we have had SIVs with HVAC experience in Afghanistan, but need to be certified in NY. They cannot get into a certification program, because they have not been here a year, and they are left out of their field of work, to the detriment of being able to support their family, and to the detriment of our employers looking for skilled labor.

There is a way New York can help SIVs and refugees, and we have California and Colorado as a model! SIVs and refugees in these states receive resident tuition rates at state schools or free training. California went one step further and allows SIVs with service to the United States to have the same hiring preference afforded to veterans. We have begun discussions to see how NYS can help in welcoming our new families as residents of our state.

Housing is also an issue. SIV and refugee families cannot be placed in affordable housing when they arrive because they lack SS numbers and employment. In addition, these complexes cannot accept a co-signer under the state and federal guidelines.

**Keeping Our Promise Inc. Income and Expenses for SIV Support
January 2020 - December 2020**

2020 Income:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Wheels for Work | 36,200.00 |
| Tools | 2,423.02 |
| United Way - Covid Phase I and Covid Phase II grants | 17,013.00 |
| ESL Foundation | \$5,000 |
| Private Donations | 120,580.88 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total Income | 186,216.90 |

2020 Expenses:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Airfare for SIV | 148.00 |
| Apt. Essentials | 1,326.00 |
| Bank Charges | 390.94 |
| Car Grants | 61,226.62 |
| (17 cars for Wheels for work; amt includes emergency insurance pymts and car repair grants where SIVs were laid off because of Covid) | |
| Computer software & monthly subscriptions | 838.57 |
| Credit Card Fees & adjustment | 488.17 |
| Fees (professional, attorney, bookkeeping) | 2,257.25 |
| Food/groceries for SIV families | 7,160.27 |
| Insurance | 2,069.32 |
| KOP Van Expense/gas/tolls/repairs | 1108.06 |
| Marketing/Fundraising/Annual Appeal (includes printing costs) | 2107.36 |
| Mileage | 759.91 |
| Misc. | 303.79 |
| Ofc. Equipment (printer) | 307.99 |
| Office Supplies | 480.16 |
| Parking | 34.00 |
| Payroll | 21,537.49 |
| Phone - KOP | 36.00 |
| Phones-SIVs | 1090.61 |
| Postage | 675.82 |
| Rent & Security for SIV families | 32,172.91 |
| Tool Grant | 2472.24 |
| Utilities for SIVs | 250.00 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total Expenses: | \$139,241.48 |

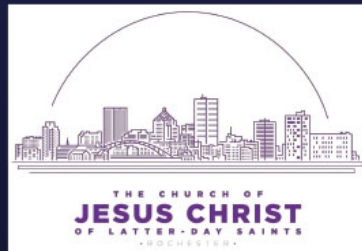
Number assisted with resettlement and emergency Covid relief funds: 42 families totaling 144 individuals

Program note: Keeping Our Promise does not receive government funding.

It was February when news stories started highlighting the spread and ramifications of Covid. March 11, the WHO declared Covid a world-wide pandemic. **Keeping Our Promise** felt it necessary to cancel our Annual Spring Dinner for the safety of the community. So many have been affected in Rochester by this pandemic, and our sympathies go out to all. While we did not have our annual dinner as intended, thank-you for helping us with our mission and purpose to support the Afghans and Iraqis who served the U.S., and have made Rochester their home.

Thank you to our generous sponsors for their support!

Partner:



Supporter:



Patron:

David Bovard
Wendy Cohen
Karl Greenhagle
Pittsford Wegmans
Evan and Noreen Selinger
Marc and Deb Solomon
Souls Ajar Book Group,
Fairport, NY
Kim and Matt Staffieri
The Harley School

Time: 1 AM

Location: Rochester Airport

There was no place in the world I'd rather be at 1:00 am than waiting with a lively welcoming crew at the airport for the arrival of the Skander family from Afghanistan.

As they arrived, I stood taking in every little detail, hoping to weave the moment deeply into my heart and soul.

I gazed between the beautiful 5 week new baby in my arms and his sisters obsessively. I couldn't keep myself from imagining them, just days prior, in serious danger.

I wondered "How could they ever be denied LIFE?!?"

I listened to the oldest child shyly giggle over and over. It was adorable and overwhelmingly infectious. I couldn't help but smile thinking of all the joy she would share throughout her new life in America.

I watched the mother cry. For what reason I can't say for certain. Maybe her tears flowed out of exhaustion from traveling with three children for days, or relief that her family was finally safe? Perhaps she was heartbroken having to leave family behind, and even nervous at the thought of being in a new country?

No matter the reason, I knew she needed a long embrace. As we hugged, I whispered that I loved her and she tenderly repeated the same.

The father, Sami, who was sharply dressed, excitedly threw on a handmade shirt adorned with an American flag, then beamed with pride! His overflowing gratitude for the assistance they received to immigrate could not be denied.

I will admit there was a time (of serious naivety) that I could not see how our country could handle the intake. These moments help me see clearly. Only one thing matters. Love.

— *KOP Volunteer Chandee Searcy* —

Follow-up from Sami Skander:

Sami reports that leaving his extended family was hard.

“After 33 years of living in the homeland, it is very difficult to emigrate from a large family and leave your homeland. That is still stressful for my family.”

Sami worked as an Information Technology Officer with CARE International, and as the Information Desk Coordinator with DynCorp International. Sami logged over 200 hours in community service, and now has a vehicle.

“Now I can solve all the family problems such as doctor appointments, going to work, purchasing groceries, and at the same time do food delivery, and have some fun” Sami’s goal is to get Microsoft certified and get back into the tech world.



Ellen Smith and Chandee Searcy at Rochester Airport with other volunteers waiting for the Skander family. Ellen was trying to determine if they made their flight.



Community Partner Organizations:



Asbury First United Methodist Church provides monthly food baskets to our SIV families, has supported our horseback riding program for SIV children since 2014, and offers clothing through Asbury Storehouse.

www.Asburyfirst.org



BabyQuip

Babyquip provides strollers, compliant cribs when needed and car seats for newly arrived families.



Benezet Advisors provides pro-bono fundraising, board development, and strategic planning counsel.

www.benezetadvisors.com



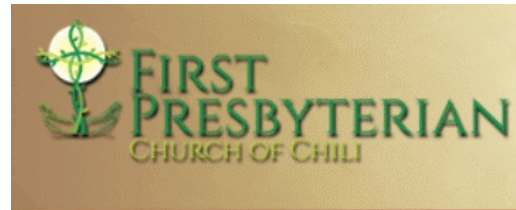
Catholic Family Center provides a welcome grant of \$975 for each family who comes to the U.S. through the International Office of Migration, or registers after arrival as a SIV refugee, and ensures each family has DSS benefits for their first 180 days.

www.cfcrochester.org

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) donates funds for furniture, food and toiletries for new families, and has covered gas costs for pickups and delivering donations.

www.churchofjesuschrist.org



The First Presbyterian Church of Chili helps with in-kind goods of personal hygiene and cleaning supplies.

www.chili-presbyterian.org

First Presbyterian Church of
HONEOYE FALLS

The First Presbyterian Church of Honeoye Falls runs our "Linen Brigade." They collect blankets, sheets, towels, small throw rugs/ bath mats, table cloths, napkins and new pillows to distribute to our new SIV families. They also assist with apartment set ups.

www.firstpresbyterianhoneoyefalls.org



The Kade Project sponsors a Toys for Tots drive every December, and SIV families are invited to pick out Christmas toys for their children.

www.TheKadeProject.org



Hearts and Homes for Refugees has been instrumental in helping make the connections for donated cars, and assisting with emergency costs for SIV families. While their primary focus is on Westchester County, NY, they have extended support to KOP in Rochester in finding ways that we can partner together.

www.heartsandhomesforrefugees.org



Lear Stables of Honeoye Falls, NY offers SIV children horseback riding and a one week summer camp at a discounted price for SIV children.

www.LearStables.com



Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church donates cleaning and toiletries for our new families, and participates in Caring Circles for our new families.

www.messiahlutheranchurch.net



Miles4Migrants is a partner organization who collects donations of airline frequent flyer miles to help SIV and refugees families get to the U.S. when they are in danger, their visas are expiring, or there is a medical emergency. They also assist with family reunification.

www.Miles4Migrants.org



R-Community Bikes offers each wartime ally family free bicycles, and low cost helmets and locks.

www.RCommunityBikes.org



ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE FUND

Neighbors for Refugees offers SIVs small scholarships to assist with training, needed tools for jobs, driving lessons.

www.neighborsforrefugees.com



Rochester Greenovation

Rochester Greenovation is not-for-profit a thrift and architectural salvage consignment store. They offer a large space for KOP donations in exchange for KOP running the store on Saturdays. KOP may also sell items in the Greenovation store that we would not use for families in small apartments. Funds from the sales support our resettlement program.

www.facebook.com/RochesterGreenovation



Rochester Museum and Science Center offers free museum passes to SIV families, and to the volunteers who drive them for visits.

www.RSMC.org



Saint's Place offers our families needed clothing shortly after arrival. They have also given four of our SIVs life-changing tool grants when employers require tools to accept certain jobs like electricians work and carpentry.

www.SaintsPlace.org



The Strong National Museum of Play offers a free pass to new families, and the volunteer accompanying the family.

www.museumofplay.org



Spiritus Christie parishioners have chosen KOP as one of their programs to support through their tithing fund, helping to pay families first rent and a security deposit for their housing, and other needed items for SIV families.

www.spirituschristie.org

NCJW Diaper Drive!

Thank you to National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Rochester Section and Terri Richardson for coordinating a diaper drive benefitting our SIV children. Your contributions make a huge difference in the lives of our families.

A big THANKS to Kristi Shields who manages to get diapers out to our families on a monthly basis, rain, shine, sleet or snow!



Temple B'rith Kodesh hosts our annual Spring Dinner and is an instrumental partner in building bridges between our interfaith communities and wartime allies. Many members are also part of caring circles and volunteers.

www.tbk.org

WESTCHESTER REFUGEE INITIATIVE

A Dynamic Network for Collaboration and Growth

The Westchester Refugee Initiative has reached out with small direct grants to SIV families to pay for phones, rent and diapers when Covid hit our area, and our annual dinner was canceled. We continue to work collaboratively to assist SIVs in New York.



How you helped one of our many families



In late 2019, Zakaria Hossiny and his family received their U.S. visas for Zakaria's faithful and honorable service to the U.S. But a visa wasn't enough. In his home of Herat, Afghanistan's third largest city, the Taliban was actively targeting peace activists and aid workers. Catholic Family Center messaged to say IOM announced a flight embargo, making it impossible for the family to be on U.S. soil before their visas expired in January 2020. Because of your donations of frequent flyer miles, Miles4Migrants was able to coordinate international flights and get this family to Logan International Airport 10 days before their visas were to expire. Volunteers drove from Rochester to Boston. A volunteer in Boston paid for a hotel for the night. Ten months after arriving, Zakaria received his Wheels for Work, and sent you this message:

I am writing to thank you for all of your kindness and caringness towards myself as well as my family. I really appreciate all of your support and help since the day that I arrived in the United States. Your generosity and gratitude towards us inspires me to help others, just as you have assisted my family and I whenever we needed the extra help. Once again, thank you for everything that you have done for us, we have been very fortunate to have you on our journey to the United States.

Kind thanks,
Zakaria Hossiny

Update on Herat: The *New York Times* reports on 10/22/2020 that a radical cleric who studied in Saudi Arabia is now enforcing a harsh Shariah law reminiscent of the Taliban. "Women are alarmed, and the government has been able to do little."

On Jan. 13, 2021, news outlets reported that the Taliban killed 13 police officers in Herat. On Jan. 20, 2021, six police were wounded in a Taliban blast. Another Taliban bomb killed the Chief of Counter-Terrorism Unit, and wounded three other officers.

Keeping Our Promise Inc.

Board Officers:

Board Chairman: Irwin Solomon
Vice Chairman: Noreen Selinger
Treasurer: Leah Granger
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Executive Director: Ellen Smith

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Dr. Kim Schmidt

SIV Advisory Council:

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Amruddin Haidari
Nabila Kohestani

Ali Moradi
Mirwais Nazuri
Zaman Rahmani
Aziz Sharifi

2020 Donors: 395

We would like to thank the following donors for your support of our wartime allies resettlement program in Rochester!

Note: If you do not see your name on the list, it is because you indicated on your donation that you wished to remain anonymous.



Deborah Abell
Ethan Abell
Kim Abell
Jacob & Heather
Adams
Sami Akbari
Cheryl Arena
Asbury First United

Methodist Church
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Callie Babbitt
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First Presbyterian
Church of Chili
First Presbyterian Church
of Honeoye Falls
Joe Flaherty
Susan & Tim Fogal
Ruth & Larry Fogarty
Susan Fox
Pamela Frame
Merrie Franklin
Megan Freida
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Shelly Martin
David Mason
Phyllis Masters
Connor & David Mayer
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Melissa McGrain
Carol McNees
Korey McNees
Sanaee Meerzaee
Patricia Megerle
Martha Memmott

Maria Mendicino
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Cecily Molak
Aleda Moon
Connie Moore
Congressman Joe Morelle
Karen Morris
Stephen Mortimer
Kathleen Morton
Peter Morton
Ruth Morton
Dennis & Wendy Moss
Todd & Donna Moss
Michael & Julian Moss
Barb & Richard Mueller
Cynthia & Charles Munier
Kathleen Mychajliw
Ellen Nakhnikian
Kenneth Nash
Mirwais Nazari
Network for Good
Helene Newman
Danielle Nolan
Daniel Nussbaum
Belinda OBrien
Connor O'Brien
Kathie OCallaghan
Don Oliver
Stephen Oosterling
Barbara Orenstein
Joanne Oriol
Jean Oswald
Jean Ott
Joseph Pagano
Alice Palokoff
Diane Parry
Nola Pearce
Jennie Peck
John Pellito
Victoria Peter
Melissa Pheterson
Lindsay Phillips
Ken Pitcher
Christine Platt

Terry Platt
Amy Polisseni
Katherine Pryor
Barbara Quinn
Recycle Bin Brockport
Carol Redden
Harry Reis
Arlene Reiser
Gail Richeson
Rose Richter-Heppner
Shirley Ricker
Carolyn Riley
Harold Riley
Emily Rosen Rittenberg
Liza Robbins-Theuman
Alona Robinson
Victoria Robinson
Anne Rodgers
Marilyn Rosen
Joanna & Ian Rosenthal
Michael Ross
Meredith Rossborough
Tom & Ellen Rusling
Ellie Rusling
Kathleen Ryan
Jawaid Samadey
Ralph Saunders
Judene Scheidt
Julia Schliff
Kim Schmidt
Patrick Schmidt
Madeline Schmitt
Jeffrey Schultz
Wayne & Hilda Schultz
Mary L Schwalb
Carla Schwartz
Gail Schwartz
Theresa Schwartz
Heidi Schwarz
Elizabeth Scott
Chandee Searcy
Marjorie & Scott Searl
Arline Seideman
Noreen & Evan Selinger
Lisa Shaffer
Caroline Shaw
Sheryl Silberman
David & Edie Silver
Sharon Silvio
Wayne Slingluff

Ellen Smith & Tim Pryor
Deb & Marc Solomon
Irwin & Ellen Solomon
Steven Solomon
Lauren Soltman
Denise & Mitch Speicher
Spiritus Christie Church
St. Louis Church -
Saint's Place
Kim Staffieri
Matthew Staffieri
Seth Stanton
Donna Stefano
Sara Steffenhagen
Rabbi Peter & Amy Stein
Elizabeth Steinberg
Lindsay Steinberg McGrail
Rosmarie Stepanik
Meaghan Sternowski
Eugenia Steven
Irene Stumberger
Patricia & Paul Tavolette

Mary Lou Teumer
The Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter
Day Saints
The Harley School
Third Presbyterian
Church
Vicky Thomas
Athena Thomas-Visel
Tate Tischner
Paul Tomblin
Tomra NY Recycling
Lois Tucker
Rabbi Rochelle Tulik
Marcia Layton Turner
Union Congregational
United Church of Christ
United Way of Greater
Rochester
Jean Van Etten
Lin Vanderstyne
Louise Vanni

Paulette VanSice
Don & Cheryl Varn
Melissa Wade
Dennis Wake
Liz Waldner
Julia Walsh
Wegmans Food Markets
Inc.
Greg Weinrieb
Robin Weintraub
Kathryn Wesley
Nancy Westendorf
Helen Wiley
Kathleen Wilkinson
Patrick Williams
Wendy Willis
Virginia Witt
Tiffany Wood
Rona Wyner
Bill & Wendy York-Feirn
Zaretsky & Associates

Volunteers Making It Work 10,247 Volunteer Hours Logged!

The commitment of our volunteers in **Keeping Our Promise Inc.** is what makes our resettlement program so successful. We have 414 registered volunteers who help from time-to-time with active on any given month. We have 227 volunteers registered on our **Caring Circle and Volunteer Face Book Page**, who may assist with rides, or finding items for apartments and families. What is very special is that parents are encouraging their children to participate, and share in this community endeavor. Julie Cataldo tracks volunteer hours on a monthly basis.



Julie Cataldo tracks all of the volunteer hours for KOP

Keeping Our Promise Inc. holds community zoom meetings for volunteers approximately every 6-7 weeks so we can all stay connected, get feedback from each other, and work together on making this the best resettlement program in the country. Our next meeting is March 14th at 2 PM. You must be a registered volunteer to join. Tentative dates for 2021: April 25, June 6, July 25, Sept. 19, Nov. 7, Dec. 19.



What the future holds for SIV resettlement

As we were finishing our annual report, news came from the White House that President Biden has ordered a review of the SIV program that will include looking into legislation to expand the SIV program for Iraqis and Syrians. The Iraqi program officially closed in 2014, leaving an estimated 100,000 Iraqis stranded who served the United States. The U.S. pulled out of northern Syria in October 2019, and left many Kurds who has served with U.S. forces fighting ISIL.

The President has ordered a review whether it would be appropriate to seek legislation that would create a SIV program for individuals, regardless of nationality, who faithfully assisted the United States government in conflict areas for at least 1 year, or made exceptional contributions in a shorter period, and have experienced or are experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a result of their service.

President Biden has also ordered a review of: staffing levels for the SIV program; guidelines for reopening or reconsidering applications; guidance for cases where a former employer is unable or unwilling to provide employment verification; and ways in which to ensure applicants are not prejudiced by the government delays in processing their applications.

These reviews and potential solutions were mandated through a U.S. District court settlement in a lawsuit brought on behalf of Afghan and Iraqi allies who qualify for visas. There are an estimated 17,000 Afghan translators and support personnel affected by these delays.

We look forward to working with our local Congressman Joseph Morelle, Senator Kristen Gillibrand and Senator Charles Schumer on ways in which we can best help those who served with, and for the United States of America.

We Can Do This. You Can Help.



Keeping Our Promise Inc.