



## A Chaotic Time

Hi friends.

Over the past eight years, with gleeful joyfulness, we celebrated every single war time ally friend that we could help get to Rochester. We posted photos and had welcome announcements galore.

Last year at this time our goal was to assist 40 SIV friends in 2021. You may have noticed that since this summer, we have been quiet. It is because we have been working seven-days a week to help resettle 232 Afghan individuals who were our allies in Afghanistan.

Life for our wartime allies changed dramatically, with heartbreakingly stories almost every day coming from our Afghan friends. There was no time for announcements or dinners or celebrations.

**We were quiet.  
There was chaos.  
We had work to do.**

The stories from our Afghan friends started in May and June with sieges. The Taliban had taken over roads into the provincial cities. Farmers could not get their goods to market. People in the cities could not leave for Kabul. But with help from Miles4Migrants, three families (12 individuals) were able to get out. Another family was able to get tickets themselves to get to Rochester. You helped them with food, rent, furniture, phones.

But July was full of turmoil. Airlines announced they would no longer accept frequent flyer miles out of Kabul. One of our dear Afghan SIVs came to our office, his head bowed, and tearful:

**"It is worse than you can imagine..."**

# **In July you stepped up to help resettle 29 allies who were sought by the Taliban.**



## **Early August**

As the Taliban took over provinces, they sought those who worked for the U.S. One of our families had their house rocket-attacked by the Taliban. They shared their video of their children walking through the rubble saying "Hichi, hichi..." Nothing, nothing. There was nothing left to save.

KOP volunteers helped file "humanitarian parole" applications to assist those families left in Afghanistan find a legal way to the U.S.

In September, we started getting word from our Afghan friends who made it out in the evacuation and were at U.S. bases or "lilly pads" in other countries. In the chaos we did not know who made it out. Each email or text was welcomed news.

## **August through September you were there to help resettle 38 Afghan allies.**



## **October through December: you helped resettle 141 Afghan allies in**

It is because of you that the "American Spirit" is alive and well. Here in Rochester, we are showing the best in America. We are saying "yes, we will help." It is not easy. At times it is absolutely exhausting.

**three months! We have another 73 on our list with 18 scheduled to arrive in January 2022. Our goal for 2022: 70 families if funding permits.**

But through all of this, you and your time, your efforts, your support have personally changed the lives of 232 wartime allies this year, offering a new life path for parents and children. They are safe from the Taliban, and starting their new lives in Rochester. Your kindness and generosity will never be forgotten by those who served the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

## New Team Members!



**Laurel Prothero**

Laurel Prothero is joining our KOP team as the new Assistant Director beginning Jan. 3, 2022. Laurel previously worked at the University of Rochester for the past nine years in the roles of Research Coordinator and Psych Specialist. She is currently finishing her Master of Social Work degree at SUNY Brockport.

Laurel joins KOP with a double Bachelor of



**Chandee Searcy**

Chandee Searcy began volunteering for Keeping Our Promise in early 2019 and quickly became an indispensable member of our volunteer force.

She is KOP's liaison with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She is frequently at our late-night airport arrivals, and she also volunteers on the fundraising committee. Chandee does this all while raising four amazing children

Psychology and International Studies degree with minors in Anthropology and Sociology from RIT.

Laurel loves to spend time in nature with her daughter, travel, and you might also see her outfitting people in vintage clothing at the Yards Collaborative in the Rochester Public Market.

You can reach Laurel at:  
[laurel@keepingourpromise.org](mailto:laurel@keepingourpromise.org)

with her husband and sitting on the board of Family Promise of Greater Rochester (formerly RAIHN).

In 2021, Chandee transitioned to KOP's part-time Community & Volunteer Engagement Coordinator and Administrative Assistant.

You can reach Chandee at: [chandee.keepingourpromise@gmail.com](mailto:chandee.keepingourpromise@gmail.com)

## Introducing our newest board member: Tom Rusling

Tom Rusling is a philanthropically minded individual who joined our KOP Board of Directors in July with ambitious visions!

Tom found out about KOP through his daughter who is a volunteer, and started helping the organization with in-kind donations, and meeting our war-time ally friends.

In being an active member of the board, Tom says he enjoys raising money for worthy causes including Keeping Our Promise! He is now an integral part of KOP's fundraising efforts enabling us to assist in resettling as many wartime allies as possible in the Rochester region.

Retired since 2011, Tom is a Yale graduate with an Economics degree and successfully rose through the ranks of Howe and Rusling, Inc., Investment Management, where he became president for 29 years.

Tom's interests are varied and include: choir director at three churches; highly ranked amateur tennis player; Dir. of Rochester Voice Squad; Bridge Life Master; gardener; and collector of wines.



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