

Refugee Resettlement Coalition of Otsego County
Wednesday, August 10th, 2022 4 pm via GoogleMeet

Attendance: Ameen Aswad, Housing, Catholic Charities; Debra Marcus, Family Planning of South Central NY; Elizabeth Monaco, Delaware and Otsego United Way; Kathleen DeLacy, The Center, Utica;; Brett Heindl, SUNY Oneonta; Margaret Parish, FUMC; Sean Lewis, Pres. & CEO, Otsego County Chamber; Carli Ficano, Hartwick College; Jeff Katz, Community Foundation; Mark Wolff, Hartwick College, Jeannine Webster; Alan Sessions, Dan Maskin, Opportunities for Otsego; Wayne Smith, Paul Patterson, Ben Holscher, Marti Swords-Horrell, note-taker,

Welcome and Introduction – Debra Marcus (Next meeting Wednesday October 12, 2022)

Much progress in 10 months, started in Oct. 2021 & last week we submitted Circle of Welcome application to Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services to begin the process. She explained all we have done by noting the contributions of so many. Apologizing in advance to those she inevitably left out, this has been true group effort. THANK YOU TO...

Kathleen DeLacy—our guide, advisor, motivator & expert

Friends at Center who have been so generous w/ time & expertise—will allow several of us to “shadow” Steering Comm meeting every week—Ameen Aswad, Laura Dohner, Carli Ficano, Sarah Lopez, Marti Swords-Horrell, Jeanine Webster, Mark Wolff-real commitment of time & effort

Marti—scribe, obtaining bank account using Oneonta First United Methodist Church as address, FUMC storing items donated (quickly running out of space)

Carli- developed housing survey, talking to landlords, touring potential sites =Multiple affordable housing options, with me completed application to LIRS , created draft budget w/ Ameen

Ameen—connection to faith communities, will be our contact with DSS

Laura—will be overseeing all ESL classes, sent TY notes to donors

Jeanine—will be shadowing Center staff, along with Carli, Mark and Laura to learn how to initially welcome refugees

Mark-bringing Utica The Last Refuge here tomorrow—communicated with filmmaker, connected with Foothills, extensive publicity for film, created Facebook page & email address

Geoff Doyle – Exec Dir of Foothills Performing Arts Center, providing venue for film gratis, plus much publicity on marquee out front

Ben Holscher- created logo, short nickname “The Coalition” & website, w/ help from Geoff Doyle

Jeff Katz & Community Found of Otsego County—provided means to raise funds, so far over \$17,000 with \$1,500 more if family is from Ukraine

Brett Heindl-creating inventory of donated items, communicating with donors

Eve Bouboulis, DSS commissioner—assembled her staff to meet with us figure out what benefits entitled

Alan Sessions- chairs Employment Committee-outreach to diverse employers, substantive meetings to consider multiple factors for successful employment

Elizabeth Monaco-chairs marketing committee, ensuring consistency & branding

Thanks to all for your commitment to welcoming refugees to beautiful Otsego County, and for your financial contributions as well as for encouraging friends to do so.

Housing Committee Report – Carli Ficano – thanked all members of Housing Committee. Inventory of 6 houses or apartments in Oneonta and Cooperstown, one possible in Richfield Springs. Need deep inventory is important because arrival time is a constantly moving target. She put a link to the Housing Form in the chat. Looking into “phantom housing” of vacant buildings that may be able to use to add to our inventory. Housing needs to be available for minimally six months to a year.

Marketing Committee Report – Elizabeth Monaco – thanked her committee: Dan, Deb, Sean, Mark, Ben. Thanks especially to Ben and Mark for work on our beautiful new website. Priorities are consistency on messaging and marketing. Input welcome from the larger group (people have suggested business cards, brochures etc.) Jeff suggested we have a line of stories prepared and ready to go to local media – content heavy – e.g., announcement of the website as a story. Couple weeks later, Coalition has applied for first family; then couple weeks later, Community Foundation has given \$15,000 etc. Regular updates every couple weeks with real substance: newspapers are short-staffed and welcoming stories already written.

Film “The Last Refuge”- Mark Wolff – will be shown tomorrow, August 11th at 6 pm in the Atrium of Foothills PAC Oneonta. Masks will be provided; donations will be received at tables. 163 responses to Facebook advertising so far. We didn’t schedule any debrief after the film but if Coalition members want to stick around to answer questions, that would be great. Film screening is to show our community how refugee resettlement can benefit the community as well as the refugees, as well as to get a sense of how the community is going to respond to our families’ arrivals. Spread the word! Will we make an invitation to join the Coalition at the film screening? Mark made a large banner to drape over a table, as well as business cards with our logo, website and a QR code. Easiest to get the word out that way. There will also be a signup sheet there. Checks can be made out to the Community Foundation of Otsego County, with “Otsego Refugee Resettlement Coalition” in memo line.

Logo, Website and Facebook Page – Ben Holscher. Considers himself a late joiner, but excited about the compassionate nature of our mission. Goal was to keep the website simple and clean, community focused so the word will get out with a compelling message to inspire folks to get involved. Sees the potential for this effort becoming a dynamic force in the community, so the website is expandable. Welcomes feedback and suggestions. May add a page “Media Releases” so we can publicize our own stories.
www.refugeotsego.org

Inventory and Item Donations – Brett Heindl. Thank you very much to Margaret Parish for her help accessing the space and getting things into First United Methodist Church: he added the spreadsheet of what we have so far to the chat. Some things we have plenty of (dishes and silverware). We are running out of space; we don’t have room for furniture (beds, couches, tables etc.) As we hear of folks who have these items, please ask them to hold onto them in a climate controlled space for now and when we need them, we’ll rent a truck and pick them up. For smaller items, people can email Brett and/or Margaret. Mark has the spreadsheet of volunteer responses – a number of people have offered storage space. Mark, Brett and Margaret will confer about this.

Working with The Center – Carli explained that refugees typically fly from JFK to Syracuse and persons from The Center welcome them. Carli and others are ready to “shadow” Center staff as they start to welcome refugees. Kathy from The Center reported that the position of Coordinator of Sponsorships has not yet been filled, so she is covering. Please contact her if anyone wants to apply for this job. Coordinator will be training folks on how to help refugees. Content is left for coordinator to develop. All we have done so far will stand us in good stead once the coordinator is hired. She noted that the Center determined years ago that it’s worth it to buy new mattresses rather than collecting used ones. Kathy will send the job description for the Coordinator position once this call is over. Kathy responded to questions in the chat: what’s the role of the Center with regard to 501c3. She is inquiring of LIRS about insurance etc. She is assuming that 501c3 will be funneled through the Center. Jeff had spoken with Shelly about money transfers. We are in the process of opening a bank account.

How to Donate, How to Volunteer – Debra Marcus suggested people look at our wonderful website and asked all to consider donating, and ask a friend to donate.

Other concerns, ideas and announcements – none. See you all tomorrow at Foothills!

Meeting ended at 4:45 pm with thanks to all.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Marti Swords-Horrell

Commented [DM1]: