

inSPIRIT



A Publication of Kentucky Refugee Ministries

SPRING 2005

969 B Cherokee Road • Louisville, KY 40204 | 201 East Maxwell Street • Lexington, KY 40508

upCOMING

World Refugee Day: June 20

Plans are underway for the annual "Day of Remembrance and Celebration."

Culinary Connections

Get involved and join the fun of putting together our annual November fundraiser.

And Remember...

Find out more information about KRM efforts at our website: www.kyrm.org

Lessons In The American Dream

Financial Literacy for New Arrivals

By John Koehlinger, Grants Coordinator



A group of Somali Bantu refugees learns about checking accounts at Bank One's Highland Baxter branch.

Every Tuesday, Terrie Sellers teaches a group of Somali Bantu refugees the basics of personal finance and money management. The crash course is one part of the Refugee Assets Development Initiative (RADI), a new financial literacy program underwritten by a \$30,000 grant from Bank One.

For the Bantus, most of whom were farmworkers in Somalia

before fleeing to refugee camps in Kenya in the early 1990s, many features of the American financial system are new and confusing. But class participants can soon be seen writing checks, filling out deposit slips, deciphering utility bills and pay stubs, and poking at calculators to balance their monthly household budgets.

RADI will provide refugees with ongoing financial education. As the participants start working and saving

money, future classes will cover such topics as using credit wisely and first-time home buying. The program will help newcomers like the Somali Bantus move, step by step, toward realizing their own version of the American dream.

"The refugees settling in Louisville bring a lot to our community—a strong work ethic and a

real determination to succeed" said Todd Munson, President of Bank One. "We at Bank One are happy for the opportunity to partner with Kentucky Refugee Ministries to assist these families in building financially secure lives here."

In Their Own Words

I Am

By Jamal Abdi

**Jamal is a fourteen year old student at
Iroquois Middle School.**

*I am from bad country.
Fighting
Hungry
Die
Kill some people.*

*I am from Somalia.
I am from the street.
No home.*

*People die.
Boom! People shoot guns.*

*I hear shooting in the street.
My mom is crying.
My mother holds me.
My father, he dies shooting.
I cry.*

*Four sisters, lost.
I don't know where she goes.
Two boys are lost in Ethiopia.
I don't know where my
brothers and sisters are.*

*Good.
I feel good now.
I am in America.*

inTHIS ISSUE

In Their Own Words

Priscila Flores tells of her many travels and appreciation of diverse cultures. (page 2)

Director's Letter

There's no shortage of ways you can help create a stronger community through KRM. (page 2)

Youth Tutoring Program

Enjoy pictures and notes from student field trips. (page 3)

Volunteer Profile

Mary Lynne Ziegler donates her time organizing donations for our clients. (page 4)

Mark Your Calendars

Volunteers Needed

World Refugee Day: June 20, 2005

Looking for a way to learn about the world? Make a positive impact? Educate your community? Eat good food? Then volunteer to help plan World Refugee Day: A Day of Remembrance and Celebration.

Culinary Connections 2005

Culinary Connections, held annually in November, features appetizers from over 40 area restaurants, cooking demonstrations by area chefs, and a silent auction. Volunteers are needed for various committees, from the decor to the food to the auction. This event is always fun to put together, and even more fun to experience. For more information, please contact Sara Head at 479-9180 ext. 25 or volunteer@kyrm.org.



In Their Own Words

Labor Of Love

By Priscila Flores, ESL Student,
& Steve Worful, ESL Teacher

It's a given that we, as teachers, know very little about what brings our clients to America. I was amazed recently when one of my students, a middleaged nurse from Cuba, began talking excitedly in Amharic with Tedla Desta, a young man from Ethiopia. I asked her to tell her story.

In what she wrote and told the class, we can see why she was quickly placed in our intermediate English class, then in the advanced. And we can see that she'll adjust very well to her new life.

"When you come to a country you have to learn its history and culture," she says. She knows this because she's done it before.

My name is Priscila Flores. I'm from Cuba and arrived in the U.S. almost three months ago. My husband came four years before me, because I'm a nurse and Cuban government refused to give me the permission to come to U.S.

My husband and me have been separated two times. On December, 1981 my ministry send me to Ethiopia for work there as obstetrics nurse. I was there two years. I worked in Debre-Markos Hospital, Gojjan Province. It's 300 kilometers north from Addis Ababa. I got there good experience about my work because I worked hard in delivery room. I was the only obstetric nurse in the hospital so I was on call all the time. I do 1,050 delivery in two years. I get a good time because the other coworkers like



The very worldly Priscila Flores in the advanced English class at KRM.

me and the patients preferred my work. They said the Cuban nurse is very kind and her work is good.

It was obligatory for me to learn Amharic. When I went to work there the other Cuban nurse said to me, "You have to speak English, not Spanish." Then she left the hospital. I didn't know nothing about English – only "pretty." So I

worked with a translator, but she translated from Amharic to English. So I studied myself every day from a book. After two or three months my English became better. But the worker staff decreased and there was no one to translate to English. The same problem again! But the Ethiopian nurses taught me to speak Amharic. After I worked with patients I could communicate with them. I could know their problems.

At night, when the work was slow, Priscila had an opportunity to talk with other women in the hospital, acquiring a real understanding of Ethiopian culture.

"They think Ethiopia is the best country in the world!" she says. "They say they are the only country to speak Amharic, the only country to eat anyera, and they say that they have never been conquered."

Anyera, Priscila said, is made of ground wheat fermented forty days, then made into a flat bread to which meat and "very hot" spices are added. She says, without smiling, that she ate it.

The calendar was different, too, made of twelve months of 30 days and one month of five days. Each of the thirty days is named after a person or angel in the Bible, so in the hospital a woman might say a particular event occurred on "Gabriel's Day," not the numerical date. So Priscila had a lot to learn.

When I finished my two years of work I returned to Cuba and continued working in my hospital. This hospital is in my home, Remedios City. I worked in the delivery room for twenty years. How many babies? Who knows?

Now I'm in Louisville. Finally my government permit to me to come. I'm with my husband, he wait for me four years. I'm very happy because I wanted it always in my life.

But her fondness for Ethiopia remains. Recently a substitute ESL teacher told her of his upcoming trip to Ethiopia.

"I asked him if he could put me in his suitcase and take me along, too."

Director's Letter

By Carol Young, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It's Not Too Late was the name of a roadside beauty shop we passed traveling from Accra to a small refugee camp in West Ghana last fall. The name had a religious connotation, as did many of the other shops of Ghanaian and refugee entrepreneurs: *By God's Grace Bakery, Peace and Love Tailoring Shop, Heaven's Light Business Center and Great God of Fashion Shop.* While these names sound unusual to us, they represent the



The Bakers Inn in Budunburum Refugee Camp in Ghana, just outside of Accra.

convictions of people who have little except their faith and hope. During my 5-week assignment with Church World Service in West Africa, the richness of their faith became very clear – religious or not by our standards, the refugees destined to come to the U.S. believed their lives will be better here.

In response to this belief, I'd like you to know that for 2005 "It's Not Too Late" to join with our Board, staff and current volunteers in our efforts

to welcome these strangers into our communities of Louisville, Lexington and the surrounding areas. KRM offers opportunities for individuals to volunteer in local and national advocacy efforts, resettlement and sponsorship, fundraising, mentoring and other areas as well. Visit our website, www.kyrm.org, to find an area that fits your time and talents. With your help we can continue to strengthen our programs to assist our newest neighbors. Together we can create communities whose strength IS their diversity.



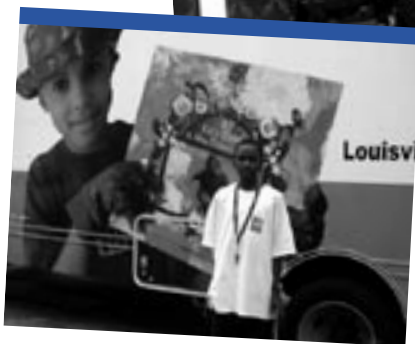
Youth Tutoring Program

Building Futures

By Sara Payne, VISTA Youth Programs Coordinator,
& Sara Head, VISTA Volunteer Coordinator

In addition to weekly tutoring sessions, refugee students and their tutors take monthly field trips. Here are some photos of our October trip to the Louisville Science Center and our December End-of-Semester Party at the Americana Community Center. Next stop: the Louisville Zoo!

Above, right: Arsene, Aweys, Hawa, and Ezekiel experience blue screen television technology as they play a virtual soccer game at the Louisville Science Center.



Above, left: Aweys prepares to enter the Bookmobile that visited the End-of-Semester Party.

Below, left: Ezekiel, Jetmir, Fidan, and Arsene play and learn at one of the Science Center's many exhibits.

Below, middle: Mohammed, Noel, and Sidow return from checking out books at the Bookmobile.

Below, right: Building Futures students and their tutors in front of the Louisville Science Center.



in BRIEF

Comings And Goings

KRM bids a fond farewell to:

Rachel Chaney, Job Developer

Carla Taylor, General Godsend and Savior throughout ten years of dedicated service

And we heartily welcome:

Delay Mendez, Cuban Caseworker

Sherry Maddock, Lexington Office Coordinator

Vivian Villarreal, Job Developer

New Arrivals

This year, in addition to the continued resettlement of the Somali Bantu families who began arriving in the fall of 2003, we anticipate the arrival of a new group, the Meskhetian Turks. Over the next few months between 50 and 100 Meskhetian Turks are expected to arrive in Louisville.

Read more about your new neighbors on our website, www.kyrm.org.

Thoughts From The Board

Home

By Terry Singer, Board Chairman

I was born and raised in Pennsylvania, but I have moved a lot and have called many places my home. I have moved by choice. I have never had to flee my home, my family, and my livelihood. So I was immediately intrigued when, as a sponsor, I met my first refugee family at the Louisville airport years ago.

Five minutes to leave home or be killed; the sight of a family member dying by violence; a long trek to holding camps in Macedonia; arriving in Louisville without a clue where that was and with very little English language skills...that was the refugee family that was assigned to my church, Highland Presbyterian, and it was my role to coordinate the transition.

There are many popular sayings about the concept of "home." For me, it has very strong, intrinsic values of family, intimacy, joy, security and more. But none of them capture as well as the quotation from Kathleen Norris what has to be the central idea of home for refugees: "Peace, that was the other name for home."

Those of us who work with refugees as employees, volunteers, donors, or other interested parties need only listen to the stories of our new neighbors to understand why peace becomes so important. I would urge you to join me in praying and working for peace, recognizing that we are laying the groundwork for weary travelers who just want to go home.

*"Peace, that was
the other name
for home."*

— Kathleen Norris

Recommended Reading

Every Christmas, as a gift to ourselves, we add a book or two to our small library of titles about refugees. This year, one of those books was such an immediate hit among staff members that we had to order a second copy to keep everyone happy. *Of Beetles & Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard* was written, and originally self published in 2000, by Mawi Asgedom, a refugee from Ethiopia. The author, who attended Harvard University on a full scholarship, is visiting Louisville this month to speak to our middle and high school refugee students.



Kentucky Refugee Ministries
969 B Cherokee Road
Louisville, KY 40204
502-479-9180
www.kyrm.org

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MISSION

Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Inc. (KRM), a non-profit organization, is dedicated to providing resettlement services to refugees through church- and agency-based sponsorship in order to promote self-sufficiency and successful integration into our community. KRM is committed to offering access to community resources and opportunities and to promoting awareness of diversity for the benefit of the whole community.

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Volunteer Spotlight: Mary Lynne Ziegler

Making Louisville Home

By Sara Head, VISTA Volunteer Coordinator

In the depths of the basement...in the very back corner of Kentucky Refugee Ministries...you can often find our diligent volunteer, Mary Lynne Ziegler. To the sound of the radio or a book-on-tape, she works weekly to organize the generous donations we receive for our clients.

Lee Welsh, Sponsorship Coordinator, says, "It's a tedious and tiring job, and Mary Lynne's work is invaluable."

Mary Lynne began volunteering after her church sponsored a refugee family over a year ago. Although her work may seem unglamorous to some, it has an impact on the life of each refugee that arrives.

As she sorts through the mountains of donated linens,

kitchenware, lamps, and toiletries, she packs items for arriving refugee families. Occasionally, when the supply of toiletries gets low, Mary Lynne enlists the help of her husband Bob, a pilot for UPS, who brings back sample soaps, shampoos, and lotions from his travels. These household items are then delivered to a refugee family's apartment the day of their arrival. Since most refugees arrive with little more than a suitcase, Mary Lynne's packages go a long way towards making an unfamiliar apartment feel like a home.

"Families are always happy to see the things she's packed; she thinks of everything... tablecloths and matching napkins, even toys for children!" says Dalay Mendez, Cuban/Haitian caseworker. "She



Mary Lynne Ziegler regularly volunteers to organize donations and distribute them to arriving families.

helps me a lot."

Mary Lynne also volunteers through the Neighborhood Visitor Program and is a mentor to a young single mother. Previously, she taught hearing-impaired children for nearly fifteen years.

Thank you for all your hard work, Mary Lynne!