

Interns Serve and Learn through Refugee Ministry

Carrying out a mandate of the 74th General Convention, the Episcopal Church's Young Adult Ministry cluster began the Short-term Internship Program (SIP) in August 2005. SIP helps young adults to engage their faith and learn valuable leadership skills while serving local communities through social justice work. Three SIP interns served the refugee program at EMM affiliate offices in Atlanta, Louisville, and Concord (NH) and share their experiences here.

ACTING UPON OPPORTUNITIES

Bart Smith



From time to time, I wonder how faithfully I respond to my baptismal promises to seek and serve Christ in all persons, love my neighbor,

strive for justice and peace, and respect the dignity of every human being. I firmly believe that God provides people with opportunities to act upon these principles and the grace to follow through on these commitments.

Such an opportunity came my way this summer when I had the pleasure of working at Kentucky Refugee Ministries, a refugee resettlement agency in Louisville, Kentucky affiliated with Episcopal Migration Ministries and Church World Service. As one of KRM's interns, I assisted my colleagues to support refugees from different parts of the globe who were re-establishing their lives in the U.S. My work included providing transportation; accessing case files; running errands; making phone calls to sponsors, landlords, and social workers; filling in as the receptionist; processing paperwork, and many other things. During all of this I was fortunate to have regular contact with clients, and in the process, listened to their stories and concerns.

My anecdotes cannot adequately describe the depth and richness of my experience. I can only attest to the courage, endurance, character, and spirit of the many individuals and families who survived hardship and suffering so foreign to my American middle-class

world and yet have the strength to move on through the obstacles of the resettlement journey. I can only attest to the compassion, patience, and intelligence of KRM staff who work daily to make that journey easier and the prospect for improved lives a reality.

The biblical message to welcome the stranger and stand with the oppressed is put into action in refugee resettlement. I am more internationally conscious now, not indifferent to issues and problems outside North America. This internship was a unique opportunity for me to answer the call of the God in Christ to love others as God so passionately loves us.

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AN UNEXPECTED LUNCH

Caitlin Frazier



I arrived in Atlanta for my SIP Internship on June 5th, the day after Pentecost. That evening I had dinner with my mentor, Benno

Pattison, the rector at Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, and his family. The next morning I reported for work at RRISA, the Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta. I met the director, Sandra Mullins, who showed me around the office and introduced me to staff, many who are former refugees or asylees themselves.

