



## Community Sponsorship Program

***Community Sponsorship:*** *An opportunity to welcome newly-arriving refugee families and help them to resettle in our community and become self-sufficient!*

### **What is the Community Sponsorship Program?**

The goal of this program is to *strengthen community support* of refugee resettlement in Eastern Iowa and to *increase the capacity* of the Catherine McAuley Center (CMC) to resettle a growing number of refugees by *engaging community groups* in welcoming incoming refugees and partnering to provide basic resettlement services.

CMC partners with local organizations to form Community Sponsorship Teams (consisting of 8-10 people per organization) that provide mentorship, guidance, and support to newly-arrived refugee families. As Community Sponsors, Teams help to ensure that new members of the community access all the help and information they need, in accordance with the strict regulations of the federal government. They also provide a social network, friendship, and opportunities for personal exchange.

It is important for Teams to remember their boundaries and their roles when interacting with families/clients. A Community Sponsor's job is not to solve every problem or to do for others what they can do for themselves. It is, instead, to equip, educate and guide—to empower! Sponsors must also remember to set boundaries for themselves. They are ambassadors for the community, a friendly neighbor and a part of a refugee's growing social capital in a new place.

The goal of a Community Sponsor is, in one sense, to “work yourself out of the role of a volunteer and into the role of a neighbor” as you ‘teach to’ instead of ‘do for.’ Community Sponsors are not expected to be/do everything, yet must know when to refer questions to local professionals in the community and when to communicate items to the local resettlement agency. It is a mission that is not without its challenges, but is very rewarding!

### **How does it work?**

CMC assigns families to Community Sponsor Teams based on family needs, Sponsor resources, and availability at the time that CMC is assigned a new resettlement case. Sponsor Teams cannot select families based on nationality or any other criteria.

Once the Sponsor Team's application has been approved, training must be completed and funds raised to cover some of the resettlement expenses. During training, Sponsors will learn about the pre-arrival activities, which include learning about the family they are sponsoring, and post-arrival expectations like welcoming the family and helping them settle into their new home. Over the next 6 to 12 months, the Community Sponsor Team will assist the family as they build confidence and become more self-reliant.

## **Community Sponsors help by:**

1. Welcoming the family upon their arrival and providing for their basic needs (food, clothing, transportation, etc.)
2. Ensuring that the family has access to transportation to primary medical care.
3. Tutoring adults in English as a Second Language for a minimum period of time through CMC's Education Services program.
4. Assisting with job interview preparation and creating resumes, and identifying transportation options as needed with direction from CMC's Employment Services Case Managers.
5. Coaching the family as needed so that they understand their financial needs and obligations.
6. Conducting community orientation – showing the family where and how to shop, how to pay bills, how to use public transportation, use emergency telephone numbers, understand local laws and customs, etc.
7. Providing transportation to CMC's cultural orientation classes.
8. Maintaining regular contact with the CMC Case Manager, submitting all required paperwork, case notes, and financial documentation in a timely manner, and complying with all CMC policies related to Community Sponsorship responsibilities and guidelines.
9. Providing opportunities for cross-cultural exchange in the community – allowing refugees to teach about their culture and learn about U.S. culture.

## **Who can be a Community Sponsor?**

Becoming a Community Sponsor means taking on important responsibilities that are vital to the integration of newly-arrived refugees. **Requirements that must be met:**

- Community Sponsors must have a willingness to work with a refugee family to empower newcomers to become independent.
- Sponsor Teams must be part of an established business, non-profit entity, and/or a civic or faith-based organization (as evidenced through business registration in the state of Iowa).
- Submit a background check as part of the application process.
- Demonstrated experience (either through volunteering, lived experience, work, or personal relationships) working with or supporting refugees or immigrants, OR low-income populations.
- Ability to raise \$1,000 to provide financial assistance (or in-kind goods) to be used on behalf of the family for things like rental assistance or basic necessities. CMC will hold the funds in escrow, and the Sponsor Team can make a proposal for the spending of funds, otherwise CMC will allocate funds to cover the family's expenses as necessary.
- Sponsor Teams will need to complete CMC's orientation training and devote approximately 15 - 20 hours/week collectively for the first two months, after which the amount of time required will gradually decrease.
- Must have a Team Coordinator who will serve as the Sponsor Team's liaison with CMC.
- Need a strong, well-organized Team (of at least 6 Sponsors, including the Team Coordinator) with diverse skills that can help refugees access social services, and assist with healthcare coordination, education, and employment.
- Sponsor Teams commit to walking alongside a refugee family for the first 6 months to 1 year after their arrival.

For more information, please contact [communitysponsorships@cmc-cr.org](mailto:communitysponsorships@cmc-cr.org) or call 319-363-4993.