

New Grant Funding Helps to Welcome the Stranger



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Christians throughout the world are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ. We know from the biblical account of the Christmas story, Mary and Joseph traveled approximately 80 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to participate in the census decreed by Caesar Augustus. History tells us that this journey took about a week due to Mary's advanced pregnancy.

We will never know for certain why Mary and Joseph were not welcomed at the Inn in Bethlehem that glorious night. Perhaps there was no room due to the census or perhaps they were discriminated against because they were from a different tribe.

In Matthew (25:35) we find these sacred words ... *I was a stranger and you welcomed me.* Today Catholic Social Services (CSS) takes these words of welcome to heart as part of our core mission.

CSS recently applied for and received a Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration grant

administered by the Department of Health & Social Services. The purpose of this grant is to strengthen local ethnic grassroots organizations to effectively become agents of change for the communities they serve.

Communities like the Bhutanese, Hmong and Southern Sudanese have started groups dedicated to helping their community members work toward their dream of earning a livelihood for their families in a peaceful place. These communities and others will benefit from this grant.

The CSS Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services (RAIS) program successfully provides newly arrived refugee families from around the world with the supportive services necessary for self-sufficiency. However, many from ethnic communities struggle and are not connected to services at established agencies such as CSS. They seek help first from their fellow community members. Through this new

leadership grant, ethnic community groups will have a chance to build stronger organizations, better equipped to serve their neighbors.

CSS strongly believes that many ethnic communities are at a point where they can best provide the leadership needed for their community members to succeed. This grant will provide these groups with many of the resources needed to accomplish these goals through capacity building training, leadership development, organizational development, program development and community engagement.

CSS is confident that by helping ethnic communities become stronger, we will have truly welcomed the stranger into our midst.

