



summer 2025

PICTURED:
*Asia and her family have created
a new life in Anchorage, where they
can raise their children and help
their neighbors in peace.*



Faces of Hope

From Refugee to Advocate: Asia's Story of Strength and Hope

Your support can help countless families like Asia's resettle, rebuild, and give back to others in their new community.

Two years ago, Asia arrived in Alaska with her family, a single suitcase, and no certainty about the future. As a former member of the Afghan Special Forces, she and her family were forced to flee Afghanistan in 2021.

After months of uncertainty and a long journey, they resettled in Alaska as Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services

(RAIS) clients, thanks to our community of support.

“When we arrived, CSS had already set up a clean apartment with food inside. That meant so much,”

Asia remembers. “But starting over in a new country, especially as a mother, is still very hard.”

With your support and guidance from RAIS, Asia began rebuilding. She took job readiness classes, joined the agriculture program, and soon started working part-time. Today, she's a full-time case manager at Catholic Social Services, helping U.S. veterans find housing and stability in the same way her case manager once helped her and her family.

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Immigration to the United States is a long and difficult process, but Asia is quick to share how she and her family endure the unknowns: **“First, I believe in God, and I know God will help us in any situation. Second, I have**

very good friends, good supportive organizations here in the United States.”

Thanks to the support of people like you, Catholic Social Services is able to walk alongside families like Asia’s every step of the way. Right now, many refugee

families are waiting for asylum decisions, stable jobs, and safe places to call home. The need is great, but so is the impact of your generosity.

Your support helps make stories like Asia’s possible. Let’s create more together.

Wellness Groups create long-term, self-sustaining impact

Each gift to RAIS has reverberating effects throughout the community, making us stronger, together, for generations.

Over the past few months, 15 Congolese new arrivals worked with RAIS staff to form a Wellness Circle. The group met every week to share their experiences resettling into a new culture and discuss healthy ways to handle stress and change.

After the first few meetings, RAIS staff were excited to see five of the Congolese participants step up as leaders

and organize the meetings on their own, hosting discussions about family, community, trust, education, faith, and spirituality.

They also featured guest speakers, including University of Alaska Anchorage Psychology Professor Steffi Kim, to share methods for processing difficult memories and feelings. **“This group of incredible resilient, wise, and beautiful women shared their perspectives on wellbeing,”** says Professor Kim, **“including the**

importance of community.”

Although the Wellness Circle began as a limited-time project, the participants have continued to plan, organize, and meet independently every week, so they can grow stronger together as individuals, families, and a community.

When you give to RAIS, your gift echoes through our neighborhoods as clients learn, grow, and become new community leaders. Your gift today creates a brighter tomorrow.



PICTURED:

Your support for RAIS helps new arrivals connect with their community and look after their wellbeing, with guided practices like Wellness Circles, or just an afternoon roller-skating with new friends (LEFT) or enjoying a nature walk (RIGHT).

Reaching our neighbors on the air!

Thank you to our friends at Radio Latina for helping us reach out to our neighbors and spread the good word about RAIS.



This year, RAIS Program Director Brigit and team member Senedy shared RAIS' impact on Radio Latina's "Bienvenidos" segment. This was an excellent opportunity to reach Anchorage's Latino community with information

about refugee support, job training, and community connection through the RAIS program.

We're so thankful for our partners who help spread the word. For many of our neighbors, **simply knowing where to turn is the first step** toward stability, employment, and belonging. Sharing that message through trusted community platforms like Radio Latina helps RAIS

connect with more people who need it and reminds them they're not alone.

If you have a media platform, channel, or publication and would like to help Catholic Social Services reach more people in our community, please get in touch!



Thank you for joining us for World Refugee Day!

We were thrilled to have so many dedicated supporters and friends there with us to celebrate the resilience of our new neighbors and all that they bring to our community.



PICTURED:

1: Dancing and traditions blend from many cultures and are always a high-light of World Refugee Day!

2: The talented Hmong dance group Ntxhais Muaj Hmoo.

3: Deputy Commissioner San Juan, proudly accepts the Government Partner Award, (LEFT) Ms. Tetyana Robbins, and (RIGHT) Adam Weinert.

4: One little artist leaving her mark!

5: Crow Creek Pipes and Drums filled the air!





In Anchorage, summer is your opportunity to Grow Local, Give Local

Every summer, something powerful takes root—Refugee farmers plant seeds, and those seeds grow into food, income, and hope for our entire community.

Grow Local, Give Local is a seasonal project that connects refugee farmers at Fresh International Gardens (FIG) with local families experiencing food insecurity. The produce they grow is harvested and delivered straight into the hands of families in need through St. Francis House Food Pantry.

Every gift to Grow Local, Give Local ripples through our community. FIG participants earn money, practice English, and build community during a time of transition, and the families receiving their harvest get more than just groceries; they get to know their community looks out for them.

Last summer alone, **over 4,600 households in Anchorage received fresh vegetables** grown by FIG farmers. That's thousands of lives touched by one shared effort—growing food together, giving it locally and building dignity into every bite.

Our neighbors need our help. Fresh produce remains the most requested item at St. Francis House, and as food prices rise, **families are feeling the strain more than ever.**

Together, we're planting hope and feeding our neighbors. Whether by funding a harvest, helping pack food boxes, or

simply spreading the word, will you be a part of this growing movement?



Scan the QR code to donate or visit cssalaska.org/donate and select

"Grow Local, Give Local" from the dropdown menu.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this year's Charity Ball!



ABOVE: Noel's painting was purchased by a mother whose son had volunteered at the shelter, met Noel, and was powerfully moved by his story.

What a night of generosity, community, and impact!

One of our favorite moments of the evening was the auctioning of a painting by Noel, a guest at Brother Francis Shelter, for \$2,500!

Noel discovered his love for painting while staying at the shelter. What began as a peaceful hobby has turned into a meaningful outlet, and now, a way to give back. The sale of Noel's painting

has gone directly toward remodeling Clare House, helping transform it into an even more welcoming space for families in crisis.

Thank you for believing in the power of dignity, healing, and connection. You made this night, and this impact, possible.



THE 34TH ANNUAL
CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES WILMA CARR
CHARITY BALL