Refugee Center and Community School at Reynolds:
A Project of the Rotary Club of Lancaster

Frequently Asked Questions

What type of services and supports are available?

The Refugee Center and Community School is open Monday-Friday, from 9:00 AM-5:00PM.

- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults
- Citizenship Classes for adults
- Additional ESL services for children before or after school
- Support for connecting to their child’s school and to become an advocate for their child’s education through our Welcoming Schools Program
- Health services
- Cultural Navigation
- 21st Century Community Learning Center Extended Day Programming for Reynolds students
- Power Packs
- Volunteer management
- Uniform bank
- Partnerships with local organizations to provide other needed resources or programs

Why was Reynolds Middle School chosen as the site for the Refugee Center and Community School?

In 2014-15, 500 refugees were resettled in Lancaster. On average, 534 refugees have been resettled in Lancaster each year during the past 3 years (http://www.refugeesinpa.org).

Reynolds Middle School has the highest number of refugee students compared with the other middle schools in SDoL. Many refugee families have been resettled in the north-west and south-west portion of Lancaster City, close to Reynolds Middle School.

How will Reynolds Middle School continue to maintain high levels of safety and security for all students and staff in the building?

The Refugee Center and Community School at Reynolds was designed with the safety of students and staff at Reynolds in mind. The front entrance to Reynolds Middle School now has a separate buzzer system than the one used for school visitors. An outside camera system is controlled by The South East Lancaster Health Services (SELHS) Community Health Center. Once buzzed in to the foyer, visitors have access to the Community Health Center door where they sign-in and out with the Community Health Center secretary. A second set of security doors in the foyer block all entry into the school office and the rest of the school. A Health Center patient does not have access to the school. Refugee Center visitors will be overseen and escorted to and from the Refugee Center by Refugee Center staff. The Community Health and Refugee Center both have bathrooms, giving visitors no need to leave the space.
What’s the process that refugees go through to come to the U.S.?

Every year, immigration law requires that Executive Branch officials:

- Review the refugee situation or emergency refugee situation.
- Project the extent of possible participation of the United States in resettling refugees.
- Discuss the reasons for believing that the proposed admission of refugees is justified by humanitarian concerns, grave humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest.

Following consultations (discussions) with cabinet representatives and Congress, a determination is drafted for signature by the President. The Presidential Determination establishes the overall admissions levels and regional allocations of all refugees for the upcoming fiscal year.

No refugees may be admitted in the new fiscal year until the Presidential Determination has been signed.

Annually, processing priorities are established to determine which of the world’s refugees are of special humanitarian concern to the United States. Fulfilling a processing priority enables a refugee applicant the opportunity to interview with a USCIS officer, but does not guarantee acceptance.*

*I’m concerned that since the community health center at Reynolds will serve refugees, my child might be exposed to a disease from outside the U.S.

The exposure risk for your child is no greater than it is going to the grocery store or any other public venue. All refugees are screened for tuberculosis prior to coming to the US. Each refugee has a comprehensive health screening visit within 30 days of arriving (and most often as close to the arrival date as possible); this visit includes screening for infectious diseases and immunization and occurs at our Brightside office or at the Water Street Rescue Mission. The screening for and diagnosis of any infectious diseases happens outside of the school.

What’s the difference between a refugee and an immigrant?

Refugees

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is someone who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was established by the United Nations General Assembly in the wake of World War II to help European refugees displaced by
the conflict. Today, UNHCR now works with 33.9 million people of concern across the world and partners with governments to repatriate, locally integrate or resettle refugees who cannot return home.*

**Immigrants**

Immigrants generally come to the U.S. for one of two reasons: they are joining family members who already live in this country or they are “economic immigrants” seeking work and a better life for themselves and their families.

Immigrants and refugees have a good deal in common. They experience new cultures and languages. They are often ethnic minorities who might face open discrimination or other forms of hostility, regardless of their immigration status.**

*Taken from www.lancasterrefugees.com

**Taken from www.iptv.org

How can I get involved?

There are many opportunities for involvement at the Refugee Center and Community School. We need volunteers for direct services, such as assisting a refugee family in navigating the school system, or indirect services, such as organizing uniforms that will be distributed to newly arrived students. Plus, monetary and in-kind donations are welcomed. Please contact us for information on current needs.

Please contact Josh McManness, Community Education Supervisor, at (717) 947-1231 or joshua_mcmanness@iu13.org.