

With funding and support from our Social Justice Committee, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish is preparing to apply to join the Catherine McAuley Center (CMC) with ongoing refugee<sup>1</sup> resettlement in the greater Cedar Rapids area! Our first step is to put together a dedicated team of volunteers to staff what CMC calls a “Community Sponsorship Team” (CST). The CST will work to help one refugee family/year on their path towards eventual application to become knowledgeable and faithful US citizens. Are we up to this challenge?

If you are 18 years or older, consider volunteering to serve in one of these roles:

- A person who can organize a parish-wide household item collection drive to find repurposed items (as requested by CMC) in time for the family’s arrival. This may require temporary storage of collected items that arrive early during the drive, and coordination with Central Furniture Rescue (CFR), the primary furniture source for CMC.
- At least 3 persons who can help move household and furniture items into the family’s rental unit. Note: A person with a truck/flatbed trailer may be extremely valuable as we assist CFR in moving furniture donations to the family’s new rental unit.
- A leader for our “house preparation team” (the entire CST) as we clean, furnish, and minimally decorate the selected rental unit before the family arrives.
- At least 2 persons (ideally, with larger vehicles who are free during the day) to help drive families to their initial health care or government assistance registration appointments.
- At least 2 persons willing to assist the family with adapting to their new cultural environment (e.g., grocery shopping, banking, busing, etc.).
- At least 2 persons willing to serve the family as English language learning tutors (classes will be held downtown Cedar Rapids at CMC facilities).
- One or more parishioners with residential real estate or property management experience in the greater Cedar Rapids area, that can advise CMC on potential rental properties suitable for refugee family renters.

That's upwards of 12 volunteers - but with the right people and God’s grace, the “miracle” of refugee relocation can occur with maximum probability of success.

As the African proverb states: “It takes a village to raise a child.” This is a similar concept! Each family that we agree to support might require our detailed attention for 3-6 months. Longer term friendships are likely to develop outside of each CST assignment.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact co-chairs Dale and Kate March via email ([marchdalecar@gmail.com](mailto:marchdalecar@gmail.com)). You can also reach Dale by phone at (319) 431-9921.

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<sup>1</sup> Refugees and undocumented immigrants are different groups. Refugees are formally invited by the USA to become Permanent Residents (aka “Green Card” holders) and, thus, can apply for public benefits and be eligible to apply for formal citizenship after 5 years of residency.