

# Association Newsletter

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## Second National Annual Conference Association for Refugee Service Professionals

**May 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010**



The Center for New North Carolinians at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro will host the Second National Annual Conference for the Association for Refugee Service Professionals.

Workshops, keynote address, and other activities will focus on themes of Best Practices including: Health and Mental Health; Research and Ethics; and Policy Development and Advocacy. *The keynote address will be*

*delivered by Ms. Lavinia Limon, former Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement during the Clinton Administration and currently Director of the US committee for Refugees and Immigrants.*

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### Our Host: Center for New North Carolinians

The Center for New North Carolinians at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has as its mission to build bridges amongst immigrant populations and existing communities across North Carolina by providing; Outreach and education, research and

evaluation, information services, technical support, and leadership development.

The largest and oldest program is the AmeriCorps ACCESS Project. It has over thirty partner organizations across the state and about 80 AmeriCorps members. A

special category of Professional Corp members serve as CNNC Research Fellows. They are employed as academics or community based professionals who bridge the gap between services and research.

## “What is your line of work“ by Marcelle Abusalbi

This is an all-too-common, recycled, and wearisome ice breaker in social gatherings. The answers are inevitably familiar, and quite often limited to a one-sentence description. Not in the field of refugee resettlement.

Since I began in my current position as Green Leaf Program Manager at Refugee Services of Texas, I garner a great amount of delight in

answering this question. What do I do? I have the opportunity to collaborate with individuals that have endured atrocious human rights abuses, witnessed the most abhorrent facets of humanity, and have undergone trials that surpass comprehension. The stories they tell with their words and with their scars are chilling. The lives they rebuild with their strength are humbling.

The goal of the Green Leaf Program is to facilitate the adjustment process for refugees through classes, groups, and individual or family counseling services. This process starts with a Cultural Adjustment workshop during the general orientation. This workshops outlines what emotions to expect during resettlement, defines

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### What is your line of work (continued)

“I simply cannot ask a client to tell me a story if I have not done the same”

stress, and offers different ways to manage the pressure. This 60 minute time allotment is also where I hope to metaphorically open the door to my office for the months to come.

I start the workshop by conveying my own story and why I became interested in working in this field. I show pictures of my parents from their arrival in the United

States. The tale is of two college students from different religions in the midst of a civil war in Beirut, Lebanon. They are afraid because their relationship crosses political boundaries and jeopardizes lives. Photos that I share illustrate how newcomers find a root in a new country and flourish. The years unfold in pictures: the modest marriage ceremony, my

parents looking timidly at the camera with two young children, and finally to their smiling and confident faces in their Lebanese-American home, holding my daughters in their arms.

The primary reason I present this to clients is to offer a window into my life. It is the underpinning ethic of my program – justice. I simply cannot ask a client to tell me a story if I have

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### What is your line of work (continued)

not done the same.

The world of refugee resettlement is fast-paced, challenging, and incredibly rewarding. It is an honor to partake in clients' lives and with them build the foundation for generations to come. This line of work

makes way for a very compelling discussion at any social gathering.

*Marcelle Abusalbi, MA, LPC-I is currently a PhD candidate at St. Mary's University and serves as Program Manager for the Green Leaf Program with*

*Refugee Services of Texas, Inc. in Austin, Texas.*

## Writing for Publication by Laurie Cook Heffron

Whoever said you had to be employed by a university or have a PhD in order to publish an article in the area of your expertise? No one. Rather, practitioners and frontline refugee service professionals have a responsibility to share their breadth and depth of knowledge and experience with other practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. The knowledge base is built most comprehensively when a broad spectrum of researchers and practitioners lend their perspective, and their insight to the field. The field of refugee services is no different than other areas of human services. In fact, in increasing the visibility of the refugee services field, it is vital that practitioners play an

active role in the building of that knowledge base and disseminating field-specific expertise around working with the refugee community. *The second annual conference of the Association for Refugee Service Professionals in Greensboro, North Carolina is delighted to present a workshop on Writing for Publication as a Practitioner. This workshop will lay out the process of writing for publication in order to dispel myths and lower practitioners' anxieties about such an undertaking. Topics will include choosing a topic, writing requirements, targeting a journal, and creating*

*writing partnerships. Presenters will also provide examples of published journal articles authored by practitioners. Please join us for tips and guidance in writing for publication and in unleashing the expertise of refugee service professionals.*

*Laurie Cook Heffron, LMSW, Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, Center for Social Work Research, School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin*

“Practitioners and frontline refugee service professionals have a responsibility to share their breadth and depth of knowledge and experience with other practitioners, policymakers, and researchers”

## ARSP Trip to Thailand by Sue Johnston and Kristen Zoellner, Minnesota Council of Churches, Minneapolis, Minnesota

So much of what occurs in refugee resettlement in one way or another is about managing expectations. This was a frequent theme in discussions, and we realized that we had our own expectations about Thailand that were different than what we actually experienced.

For example, we expected that the camp would seem worse, the food would be

spicier, and the staff would not be as highly experienced as they were.

We had the chance to meet with the OPE-IRC staff in Bangkok, tour Mae Tao clinic in Mae Sot, observe Cultural Orientation in Mae La camp, learn about UNHCR's work in the refugee camp and Bangkok, and visit the IOM Refugee Processing

Center. We were surprised to see the incredible amount of resettlement experience (both domestic and overseas) the staff in Thailand had. The quality of life in the camp community was surprising and made us think of resettlement in a different way, more complex way. We saw what refugees give up when they leave the camp and come to the



Mae Tao Clinic

Photos by

Kristen Zoellner

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courage it takes to leave one's community and everything that is familiar to go to a new place. We also got a glimpse at the complexity of resettlement in the context of international politics, the efforts of NGO's trying to build capacity in refugee communities, and questions about Burma's political future. It was both difficult and gratifying to have a fuller understanding of what refugee resettlement means on a large scale.

As for the food—it was wonderful. All who prepared it were surprisingly accommodating to the American palate.

Thanks to ARSP for organizing such a thought provoking and informative trip.



Mae La Cultural Orientation



Mae La camp

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

FY 2010 ORR Discretionary Programs Reviewer Solicitation: The Office of Refugee Resettlement is seeking reviewers to assist in its review of applications received under the Fiscal Year 2010 Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) for the following programs: Supplemental Services; Ethnic Community Self-Help; Preferred Communities; Individual Development Accounts; School Impact; Agricultural Partnership; Technical Assistance; Unaccompanied Children's Services; Anti-Trafficking of Persons; and Wilson/Fish. Working in teams but reading each application independently and without

initial consultation over a 10 day period, reviewers will evaluate the applications using the FOAs' established review criteria, including such factors as organizational profile, objectives and need, approach, results and benefits, and budget and budget justification. Reviewers then meet as a team over a 2-day period in Washington DC., discuss the applications and submit final scores. Reviewers receive an honorarium of up to \$1,000 per FOA reviewed and any associated (pre-approved) travel costs.

Members of the general public, with considerable expertise in a FOA area, are encouraged to submit their resumes to become a

reviewer. Individuals who haven't previously submitted a resume, and are interested in reviewing FY 2010 applications, should submit their resume and area of interest as soon as possible as reviews begin in March.

**Conflict of Interest:** Any personal or financial interest with any agency applying for funding will preclude an individual from being chosen as a reviewer

All resumes must be sent via email to, Cynthia Edwards (email: [Cynthia.Edwards@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Edwards@acf.hhs.gov))

Comments or suggestions

Website  
[www.refugeeprofessionals.org](http://www.refugeeprofessionals.org)

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