

DETROIT HIGHLIGHTS

February 14 - 17, 2024

With the help of 88 service providers, our team arranged much-needed support for 1,359 participants – including 91% percent of the newly arrived Afghan population in the Detroit area. While we cannot share every amazing story from our work, we can shine the spotlight on a handful of compassionate professionals who made a significant difference for so many. We look forward to continuing our work February 14 to February 17 at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel. For more information, please visit [CentersforAfghanSupport](#).

[Global Michigan](#) supports the resettlement and integration of refugees across the state by providing essential services that ensure individuals can achieve self-sufficiency and seamlessly and quickly integrate into new communities.

Housing prices have increased dramatically over the past 12 months. A recent study found that Detroit had the highest year-over-year housing gain at 8.7 percent, displacing Miami from the top spot of highest-appreciating cities. Due to this trend, Global Michigan launched a Newcomer Rental Subsidies program in December, ranging from \$300-500, giving families more housing options. Guests at the Support Center were provided applications and instructions on how to submit forms for financial relief. **Strategic Initiatives Specialist Carmen Bordea** reported the team registered 38 households for program onsite and 29 were completed shortly after – a record number of 67 applications in a four-day period. Subsidies will be available through September 2026.



In partnership with the State Refugee Coordinator, several innovative solutions have recently been implemented. The University of Michigan is piloting a program called “Community Tech Workers.” Experts teach a small group of Afghans digital literacy skills, and these men and women will return to their communities with high concentrations of refugees to pass on the skills they have acquired. This approach has been particularly helpful when applying for rental subsidies online, making the process more seamless and efficient. Global Michigan hopes to expand this program into the Detroit area soon.

Global Michigan recruits volunteers to welcome and support refugees through Welcome Corps, a private sponsorship program. Sponsors greet newcomers at the airport, help find initial housing, support school enrollment and work with adults to find employment. “Programs like the Welcome Corps advance the Office of Global Michigan’s mission to make Michigan the home for opportunity for our immigrant, refugee and ethnic communities,” said **Poppy Hernandez, Global Michigan Director and Michigan’s Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer**. “Expanded refugee resettlement pathways empower more Michiganders to support our state’s growing refugee population and build a more welcoming and inclusive Michigan for all.”

State Refugee Coordinator Ben Cabanaw was proud of the warm welcome their community has given Afghans and refugees from around the world. He recalled hearing many stories where families left for other states, only to return a short time later to put down roots and embrace the many opportunities available in Michigan.

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[Samaritas](#) has helped resettle thousands of immigrants from dozens of countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Central and South America. It is one of Michigan’s largest faith-based, non-profit organizations focused on supporting and integrating refugees into new lives in the U.S.

The organization’s programming is designed to help Afghans and other displaced populations achieve independence through education, job training and employment, case management, English classes, school orientation, and community mentoring and support. **CEO Dave Morin** describes Samaritas as a safe haven for people who cannot always fend for themselves, helping children, refugees, and others who need extra support as they navigate new lives.

When speaking about the Samaritas’s work, **Supervisor Liliana Masnytska** said, “At first, our clients are not usually comfortable asking questions because they do not know where to start. There is so much to navigate, so we begin by collaborating with them to offer solutions. When I came to the U.S., we did not have an engagement like this. What I see every day is so amazing – we are helping refugees who came from very unsafe conditions restart their lives.”

When Afghans began arriving in late 2021, the Samaritas team quickly responded by helping find temporary or permanent apartments and single-family homes for those in need. Samaritas owns or operates more than 1,000 affordable apartments across lower Michigan and plans to double that number in the future.

[Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) Regional Representatives **Chandra Allgood Foster** and **Layla Gallagher** led a housing listening session, talking with Detroit area housing providers, local resettlement agencies, and the Office of Global Michigan about their experiences and barriers that must be addressed to find affordable housing for refugees in Michigan.

The cost of housing remains high as participants shared that rent averages between \$1,200 and \$1,400 per month for one or two bedrooms. Three bedrooms range between \$1,800 and \$2,200 each month. With higher mortgage rates and appropriate housing starting at \$200,000 for most families, purchasing a home is very challenging – especially considering that in many situations, these are single-income households. The group discussed the critical nature of vouchers and rental subsidies. They also stressed the importance of moving quickly to help new arrivals. However, finding proper housing with access to community services, lining up client funds and securing landlord approval can be challenging. Resettlement agencies are contractually mandated to find permanent housing within 90 days of arrival.

Housing providers look for landlords who understand resettlement programs and the state and federal funding available to their clients. Some are willing to be flexible, but others often view the additional paperwork required as an extra burden not worth their time when other prospective tenants can move in immediately.

[Bethany Christian Services](#) discussed the potential of hosting a quarterly breakfast with property managers and landlords to educate them about state and federal programs, share how resettlement programs work, describe the needs of the refugee community, and understand what is driving the reluctance to work with this population. The group agreed that continued communication and collaboration would be a positive step forward.

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Zaman's mission is to help break the cycle of poverty for women and children. Their team begins each engagement by assessing basic needs. Once clients are stable, they have an education and workforce development strategy consisting of English classes, sewing and culinary skills.

During coursework, students are also able to develop soft skills like financial management, navigating American culture and accessing U.S. health systems.



The group partners with small businesses and large corporations to place trained and ready-to-work women in high-demand jobs across the region. Recently, they have placed many graduates in roles with food service vendors at the Detroit airport and a large industrial sewing business focused on apparel.

Chief Impact Officer Monica Boomer and Director of Community Engagement Joan Walton said one of the key reasons their approach is so successful is that all programming is rooted in cultural competency and spiritual sensitivity. When Afghan refugees began arriving, Zaman's Halal Food Pantry became a trusted food source for new arrivals. Modeled after a grocery store experience, clients can select the products they need with dignity and respect. Each month, the pantry serves about 500 families – a dramatic 300 percent increase compared to three years ago. Zaman also operates a resale clothing store where clients receive vouchers to find styles and sizes that work best for their needs.

Recently, a client with urgent needs entered the program. With Zaman's help, she enrolled in English language classes, joined their culinary program and soon graduated as a baking apprentice. Today, she operates her own catering business with several local customers, including Zaman.

