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Catholic Charities of Idaho
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SMALL-SCALE RESETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIP OPENS IN POCATELLO

A new community partnership in eastern Idaho will help resettle a small number of Afghan allies and refugees who have arrived in the U.S. seeking safety from the Taliban as part of Operation Allies Welcome.

Catholic Charities of Idaho, as part of its mission to support human well-being and in partnership with the Idaho Office for Refugees, is leading a community partnership program in Pocatello that will resettle a small number of Afghan refugees in this time of urgent need. The program is prepared to welcome up to 25 Afghan refugees to the Pocatello area in the coming months. The Pocatello program has welcomed 7 arrivals so far in December.

Catholic Charities of Idaho, or CCI, is an affiliate of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, one of nine agencies nationwide that collaborates with the State Department to resettle refugees in the United States. CCI is working closely with eastern Idaho community groups, faith congregations, businesses, nonprofits and local leaders to respond to this call for help. Local employers have indicated that they will assist with current job openings.

“We’re honored, ready and willing to assist with this effort, even in a modest way, by responding to this call and showing compassion to families and individuals in great need,” said Doug Alles, Catholic Charities of Idaho Executive Director.

Scott Pearhill, who serves as a deacon at the Pocatello parish, noted that the Afghans are “our allies who have supported our national security with their very lives, making deep personal sacrifices, who now need our help.” Deacon Pearhill said it is an honor for the community to “be asked to support these brave men, women and children who are trying to make a new life in our country and in our city. I’m proud of Pocatello for its openness and generosity.”

Eastern Idaho has a legacy of strong support for welcoming refugees. In the 1970s, before Idaho's resettlement program officially began, church congregations came together to sponsor refugee families.

"It is a privilege for Pocatello to welcome and assist our Afghan allies as they begin their new lives far from what is familiar," said Brian Blad, Mayor of Pocatello. "As Pocatello's Welcoming Resolution states, our community has long been home to indigenous people, migrants and immigrants. We look forward to embracing our newest citizens, helping them feel welcomed and safe, and helping them transition into our economic and social life."

Idaho's refugee resettlement program originated in 1975 and for the past two decades has been administered by the Idaho Office for Refugees. Three resettlement agencies operate in Idaho: the International Rescue Committee and the Agency for New Americans in Boise, and the CSI Refugee Programs in Twin Falls.

"Catholic Charities of Idaho is not becoming a new resettlement agency in Idaho, but rather is a contracted 'Community Partner' service provider with the USCCB in this time of heightened need," Alles said.

"These brave Afghan allies have suffered a great loss for our sake, including the loss of homes, livelihoods and sometimes even separation from families," said Kathleen Lewis, Parish Council president at Holy Spirit Catholic Community in Pocatello. "They remind me of the Holy family of Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus who had to flee to Egypt to escape life-threatening conditions. In welcoming these Afghan partners and their families we are welcoming Jesus, who said, 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'" (*Matthew 35:35*)

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USCCB RESETTLEMENT HISTORY

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is one of nine volunteer agencies nationwide that has cooperative agreements with the Department of State to provide reception and placement services for refugees arriving in the United States. The USCCB (with its predecessor agencies) has served as a volunteer agency since the late 1940s and is the largest of the nine.

The Catholic network has assisted prominently with post-WWII resettlement efforts, the Hungarian crisis in the 1950s, the Cuban refugee program in the early 1960s, the Vietnamese efforts of the 1970s-90s, refugees from the former Soviet Union in the 1980s-90s, and post-9/11 related refugee populations from the Middle East as well as refugees from central Africa in the 21st century.

ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF IDAHO

Catholic Charities of Idaho offers social services, mental health services, and immigration legal services that improve lives, promote dignity, and build self-sufficiency. Catholic Charities is a faith-based social service organization founded on the social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. All services are based upon the fundamental belief in the dignity of all persons and a robust and long tradition in the Church of advocacy for and support of migrants and displaced persons.

Founded in 2000, the organization prioritizes service to those most in need, and fosters safety, trust, collaboration, and empowerment as the key guiding principles of its work with brothers and sisters in need. It seeks partnership, collaboration, and association with those who share its values and mission of service. CCI offers services to all people, regardless of religion, age, gender, disability, race/ethnicity, income or background.

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