

WV Interfaith Ministry (“WVIRM”) &
WV Friends of Syrian Refugees (“WVFSR”)
January 2016 Fact Sheet

Who Are We?

- WVIRM is a group of clergy and laypersons in Charleston, WV
<http://wvirm.com/>
- WVFSR is a group of concerned citizens in Morgantown and Charleston, with paid staff funded by the WV Syrian American Medical Society.

What Are Our Goals?

- To promote interfaith and cross-cultural understanding.
 - ❖ To support and assist Catholic Charities to resettle Syrian/other refugees in WV.

Why is Refugee Resettlement Good for WV?

- West Virginia is losing population - 4600 residents left WV last year.
- Syrian refugees are highly skilled and educated in the fields of medicine, nursing, engineering, pharmacy, education – they can fill workplace gaps and create jobs. Syrian Refugees are known to be drug free, with a strong work ethic.
- WV has a sizable Syrian American community that is ready to help.

Is it Safe?

- Refugees undergo more rigorous screening/vetting than anyone else allowed into the United States.
 - ❖ It takes up to 2-3 years to clear refugees before they can be selected to come to the US.

Will Refugees Be a Burden?

- Catholic Charities works with refugees to get them to be self-supporting within a few months after arrival.
 - ❖ Catholic Charities continues to monitor and integrate newly settled refugees for five years after resettlement.
 - ❖ Catholic Charities has been federally funded.
 - ❖ Catholic Charities has been resettling refugees in WV for 35 years.
- ❖ WVIRM and WVFSR have hundreds of volunteers mobilized to assist with resettling refugees to WV
- ❖ WVIRM and WVFSR has sufficient resources to assist Catholic Charities with resettlement needs.

What Do We Need From our Political Leaders?

- Say “yes” when Catholic Charities selects a highly vetted refugee and asks to bring them to resettle in WV.
- Say “yes” when Catholic Charities asks to make WV a “non US ties” state so that Churches and other organizations can directly help in sponsoring refugees that Catholic Charities selects to come to WV.

What Have WVFSR and WVIRM Done So Far?

- Connected with Outreach/Education including English as a Second Language Programs at WV State and Garnett Career Center.
- Identified Additional Resources to Partner With: Workforce WV and Temporary Agencies for Jobs Assistance, Educational Opportunities at all Levels, Counseling and After School Programs.
- Compiled a Job Inventory in both Charleston and Morgantown.
- Compiled a Directory of over 100 Volunteers – Individuals, Churches, Synagogues and Mosques who are ready to help sponsor Refugee families selected by Catholic Charities and US Conference of Catholic Bishops (“USCCB”) Migration and Refugee Service for resettlement of refugees in WV.

How did WVIRM and WVFSR Get Organized?

WVIRM formed in October, 2015 when a number of Religious leaders representing Christian, Muslim and Jewish congregations joined with other community leaders to work together to bring greater understanding of the plight of the Syrian refugees to West Virginians and their leaders.

October 2015: WVIRM held an informational webinar at St. John’s Episcopal Church regarding the refugee vetting and resettlement process. Over 150 people of all faiths attended and over 100 signed up to volunteer and learn more.

November 2015: Sent a letter, signed by over 100 people of many faiths, urging elected officials to allow resettlement of properly vetted Syrians and other refugees in WV.

November 2015: WVFSR held a rally in Morgantown and Charleston on Nov. 25. The rally was attended by over 300 West Virginians, showing that the welcoming hearts of WV are strong.

December 4, 2015: A meeting with political leaders was held at St. John’s Episcopal Church to discuss refugee issues. Senators Joe Manchin and Shelly Moore Capito, representatives from the offices of Congressman Alex Mooney and Evan Jenkins, as well as Dr. Carolyn Stuart, from the Governor’s Office of Minority Affairs and a representative from City of Charleston Mayor’s office attended, among others.

December 7, 2015: The Islamic Association of WV and the Women for Peace and Understanding hosted an Interfaith gathering: “Get to know your Neighbors.” Over 300

people attended the event and came to learn about the commonalities among the Abrahamic Religions.

What Are They Doing Now?

Currently, WVIRM and WVFSR are planning to host an Interfaith Harmony Event that would extend over 3 weeks. The event would include a spiritual, cultural and practical application reception, a questions sessions on religious dialogue and diversity and “Ask a Muslim/ Christian/ Hindu/Jew” events, to be held in Charleston, Beckley, Huntington, Parkersburg and Morgantown.