

November 17, 2021

Dear BUMC Friends,

BUMC and Congregation Beth El continue to work together to offer support to an Afghan family who recently came to the U.S. under the sponsorship of Lutheran Social Services. This week marked the three-week anniversary of their arrival in Maryland. We're writing now to give you a little more background on the family and to suggest ways you can continue to provide support.

There are five members of the Maruf-Sadat family: Mom, Dad, a 13 y/o son, an 11 y/o daughter, and a 6 y/o son. The Maruf-Sadats left Kabul at the end of August with little time to prepare and with very few personal belongings. After brief stopovers at U.S. military bases in Qatar and Germany, followed by a six-week stay at Fort McCoy in Wisconsin, the family arrived in Maryland. We had little advance notice of their arrival in our area, so they initially stayed in a Rockville hotel. About ten days later, they moved into a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Silver Spring, which was fully furnished thanks to the generosity of members of the BUMC and Beth El congregations and our greater community.

It has been a joy getting to know the Maruf-Sadat family. Mom, who speaks English fluently, is an obstetrician-gynecologist with a master's degree in public health. She had been pursuing her PhD while working in reproductive/maternal/neonatal public health. Dad also worked in the medical field in both hospital and higher education settings. His immediate goal is to improve his English, and he'll soon be starting ESOL classes at Montgomery College. The three kids have all studied English in school to varying degrees. In Kabul, the family lived in a large apartment, owned a car, and had a comfortable life. As you can imagine, the last few months have been unimaginably difficult, requiring them to adjust to their changing circumstances at the same time they are worrying about family left behind. While they miss many aspects of their lives in Kabul, they are exceedingly grateful for the generosity of our community.

**Want to help?** Your donations, financial and other, are currently needed to help support the family's needs described below (make checks payable to BUMC and mark "Refugee family" on the memo line). BUMC and Congregation Beth El will make sure that your contributions will go to support the Maruf-Sadat family's most urgent and immediate needs. For other types of support, please email the contact person listed. Thank you!

**Technology:** Donate money that could go to refurbish electronics donated by congregants. The family has received a 2010 iMac and an iPhone 6. In order to make them fully useable, we will need to purchase a few things, including a new hard drive, keyboard, and memory for the computer. The total cost of all needed items is \$300.

**Clothing:** Donate clothing in good condition for the 6 year old boy. We anticipate additional clothing requests in the near future and will let you know of those specific needs as they arise. Place your donations in the tub marked for the Refugee Family in the Narthex.

**Food:** We are working to supplement the family's SNAP (food stamp) benefits until they are better able to support themselves.

- Donate a *Giant Food* gift card in any amount. Please deliver the gift cards in an envelope to the BUMC office indicating that it is for the Refugee Family. These gift cards will help especially with the purchase of non-food items such as paper/cleaning products and personal care items.
  - Provide and deliver to the family's apartment a dinner any Wednesday in December or January. With masks on, you might have a chance to meet the family but, due to the pandemic, we are not able to eat with the family.
- Contact: Wynne Sitrin at [wfs.sit@gmail.com](mailto:wfs.sit@gmail.com) and Helene Weisz at [heleneweiszi@gmail.com](mailto:heleneweiszi@gmail.com)

**Transportation:**

- Facilitate the family's use of public transportation by donating funds to their Smart cards. The family's apartment is very close to the Silver Spring Metro as well as major bus lines. Transportation expenses add up quickly, however. A recent trip on the Metro for the five of them to see the monuments downtown cost over \$30. Your donations can help to defray the cost of using Metro.
- Donate funds to protect bikes donated by community members. The family has received five bikes. To protect the bikes from theft and the elements, we need to purchase a few things, including air tags, covers, and stands. The total cost of the needed items is \$185.

- Volunteer to drive the family on an occasional basis when needed. Contact: Lisa Sorkin at [lisasorkin@gmail.com](mailto:lisasorkin@gmail.com)

**Community Building:** Volunteer to assist Mom and Dad with networking and job hunting. Organize a social activity with kids similar in age to the family's kids. Contact: Sharon Fine at [sharonfinekatz@aol.com](mailto:sharonfinekatz@aol.com)

We are deeply grateful to all of you for expressing interest in the family as well as a desire to get involved. We will continue to give you updates. Working together, we will help the family on their road to independence. If you have any questions, please contact *Janet Edmonds* ([j.edmonds@erols.net](mailto:j.edmonds@erols.net)) or *Laury Bobbish* ([george.laury@verizon.net](mailto:george.laury@verizon.net)).

With gratitude,

The Beth El and BUMC Refugee Committee

Ps, We anticipate that we might have more offers to help than the family needs at the current time. (What a good problem to have!) If you want to do more, please consider supporting organizations that are involved in the massive local effort to resettle Afghan families. Here is a list of several such organizations:

A Wider Circle (<https://awidercircle.org/get-involved/>) (furniture and professional clothing donations)

KindWorks (<https://dokindworks.org/>) (apartment set-up and furniture/household item donations)

HIAS (<https://www.hias.org/get-involved/volunteer/volunteer-dc-area>) (mentoring, tutoring)

Solutions in Hometown Connections (<https://www.shconnections.org/volunteer1.html>) (mentoring, tutoring)