

## ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED THIS SUMMER

In summer of 2016 the refugee Congolese family of 7 was still in a refugee camp in Tanzania, living in a tent with no knowledge of whether or when they would be certified to become refugees to a different country. They had only rural experiences and skills, and had never had electricity or running water in their tent dwelling.

Last summer they moved to a house in the West Chester Borough, and all five children attended school. The parents took ESL classes, and the father of the family found full time employment—initially in landscaping and later in a supermarket, then back to landscaping when the weather turned warm again. The mother and oldest daughter found part time employment dishwashing. This summer three children participated in Club Soccer, and four children attended the YMCA Day Camp in West Chester. We are grateful that scholarships were available for those activities. This fall the youngest child is attending West Chester Friends School on a scholarship.

All this is not easy. Some 30-40 volunteers from the various faith communities meet monthly to review progress and needs. Needs can be as small as how to teach those that before had no windows how to use and care for Venetian blinds, and as large as the continual search for employment that will enable the family to become economically self-sufficient. Presently they pay a fixed portion of their rent and cover housing related expenses (such as plumbing bills). They are on their way to self-sufficiency—but not there yet.

The family has no car and gets to employment, schools, etc. by walking and at times bicycling and buses. Volunteers from the WCARRP continue to provide driving to medical appointments and other engagements to which bus transportation and walking are not feasible. Volunteers also participate in school and English tutoring. UCWC members active in these activities include Lori Ratajczak, Education Committee Chair, Sandra Schaal, Nancy Artus, and Linda Sander, tutoring, Shelly Case, Transportation Committee Co-chair, and Tom Buglio and Nancy Artus, housing.

When we first reported on this project we titled it “It Takes a Village,” and, indeed, the West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project is a dedicated village of caring people that are contributing time and talents to enable one refugee family to “make it.” However, the United Nations reports that over 65 million people around the world have been forced from their homes, and over 22 million of these are in refugee camps at this time. Over half of these are children. UCWC has been privileged to be part of this amazing effort to sponsor and resettle one family of seven. Most of the other 22 million are still in tents without expectation of changed circumstances in the near future.

As to “our” family, help with homework, English practice, and transportation to other activities is still needed. If you can volunteer some of your time, please get in touch with [Susan Brodesser](#), overall coordinator of WCARRP, who will connect you with the appropriate scheduler/coordinator, or [UCWC participants](#).

Thank you to Grove Methodist for offering their article to the other congregations to adapt and use.