

‘My house is your house’

Ministry of hospitality becomes contagious in Fort Worth

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Whether it's sharing a cup of tea or throwing a baby shower, embracing the gift of hospitality is an important avenue for

Karen Morrow's ministry among refugees in Fort Worth, Texas. Morrow, one of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's field personnel, builds relationships with refugee families and then watches those families reach out to neighbors in need.

When Morrow first met Samsa, an Iraqi woman who has been in the United States for 16 months, she spoke very little English. They communicated primarily with hand signals and simple words. Morrow spent countless hours in Samsa's home chatting over cups of tea, practicing English and answering questions about the United States.

After Morrow helped Samsa get car seats for her children through a community program, Samsa wanted to assist other mothers. When another refugee needed car seats, Samsa asked Morrow to make the required appointment. "No worry, I take

her to the appointment," Samsa said.

"Hospitality is her gift," Karen said. "One of my favorite lines from her is, 'You're always welcome in my house. My house is your house.'"

Introducing expectant Iraqi mothers to the concept of a baby shower provides a way for Morrow to be the presence of Christ. Members of Lakeshore Drive Baptist Church in Hudson Oaks, near Fort Worth, have partnered with Morrow in this ministry, hosting three baby showers for Iraqi women and building relationships with families during this time of celebration and hope.

And when the American assistant manager of the housing complex where the Iraqi women live was expecting a baby, the refugees threw her a shower.

Approximately 8,200 refugees are projected to resettle in Texas this year. Resettlement agencies work with the refugees for four to six months, but Morrow says this timeframe is inadequate for them to be self-sufficient. Morrow sees her ministry as continuing to walk alongside refugees on their journey.

Morrow says building meaningful relationships takes time and it can often be difficult to find partners willing to invest long-term in mentoring refugees.

But Lakeshore Drive members have embraced and expanded their ministry among refugees. The church partnered with Agape Baptist Church, a CBF partner church, to host a Christmas party for refugees from Burma. The congregation also works with a Bhutanese church plant and partnered with an Arabic church. Recently, church members helped serve refreshments at an international soccer tournament and sponsored a block party in a refugee community.

After Morrow began hosting baby showers for new mothers, she remembers one of the women turning to her and saying, "You grandma." Laughing, Morrow told the woman she was too young to be a grandmother. Then, a translator explained that a grandma is the one who takes care of families. "What an honor," Morrow said.

By contributing writer Lisa Jones



Baby showers provide Karen Morrow with an opportunity to build relationships and friendships with refugees in Fort Worth, Texas.