



Refugee Resettlement

Meet the People We Help...

Problem

After years in a Thai refugee camp, Naw and her nine siblings, all Karen refugees from Burma, finally received the opportunity to come to the United States, and they settled in Pittsburgh. Only a few members of the family were even old enough to work, and Naw was one of the few Karen we have resettled who had had the chance to study in the camp and knew English. As the oldest, Naw knew that she would have primary responsibility for keeping the household in order and helping to support her younger brothers and sisters.

Solution

The refugee staff set the family up in an apartment (furnished and stocked with necessities such as food and clothing, as refugees typically enter the U.S. with little more than the clothes on their backs). They were taken to doctor's appointments, signed up for public benefits, the younger children enrolled in school, the older in English language classes. JF&CS worked (and continues to work) with Naw to help her understand and manage life in America and her responsibilities. The refugee staff also helped her develop systems for keeping track of the younger children's homework assignments and other school obligations. They also arranged jobs for Naw and two of the older siblings in a commercial laundry.

Outcome

Naw's family is doing well, and the commercial laundry has been so impressed by her work (as well as the work ethic of her siblings) that after just a few months on the job, she was promoted and selected to represent the company at a state-wide conference on supporting entry-level workers. When Naw spoke about her experience as a refugee and her gratitude toward America and JF&CS, the audience was moved to tears. Naw hopes to become a nurse someday, and she knows she can continue to rely on JF&CS's refugee staff to support her in achieving her long-term career goal.