



Beyond the Protests: How to Help Refugees in Michigan

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Volunteers are needed to help refugees adjust to life in Michigan. (Samaritas)

DETROIT – With President Donald Trump's travel ban currently on hold and refugees once again allowed to resettle in Michigan, those who work with them hope people will channel their efforts into helping the refugees adjust.

The faith-based, human services organization [Samaritas](#) has been helping resettle refugees in Michigan for more than 60 years, and spokeswoman Lynne Golodner says Samaritas is always looking for mentors.

She says that includes helping refugees with conversational English, finding their way around their new towns and just generally adapting to life in this country.

"We need volunteers that can help refugees learn how to shop in our grocery stores, and go to our banks, and really understand our culture," she states. "Those things that we take for granted that we do every day may be really foreign to somebody who's been living in another country."

While many people want to donate clothing, Golodner says because the organization typically has very little notice of the ages and sizes of the families who are arriving, monetary donations and gift cards – as well as things such as museum or zoo memberships – can go a long way toward helping meet their needs.

In the past few weeks, thousands of people across the state have rallied in support of refugees, but Golodner says there is still much misinformation about who the refugees are, and what they go through to get here.

"What's unbelievable is that there is such a perception of fear of refugees, because refugees have gone through the worst traumas on the planet," she relates. "When we see the human side of it, I think it changes the conversation. "

Golodner says Samaritas is currently experiencing almost daily arrivals, including the 28 refugees from Iraq and Syria whose resettlement had to be halted when the White House travel ban first went into place.

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