

# HIAS NC Continues to Resettle Refugees

By Ellen Dubin

This year HIAS NC expects to resettle about 225 refugees in Charlotte and needs your support. Here are some FAQs:

**Q. What is a refugee?**

**A.** A refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country. (United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951).

**Q. How many refugees are there?**

**A.** More than 6.5 million people world-wide are refugees; 80% of refugees are women and children. Refugees often spend more than ten years in refugee camps in an "asylum country" before resettlement in a third country. There are only 17 countries in the world that accept an annual quota of refugees; the United States accepts and resettles more than the other 16 nations combined. The US quota for 2009 is 70,000. In recent years HIAS, Inc. has been resettling approximately 3-4% of the total number of refugees that enter the US; HIAS NC has been resettling approximately 8% of that number.

**Q. What is HIAS NC?**

**A.** HIAS NC is the only wholly owned subsidiary of HIAS, Inc.

(Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) that resettles refugees in the US. All other HIAS affiliates are either supported by their local Jewish Federations or recently became independent entities. HIAS NC was started during the Fall of 1995 and has been resettling refugees in Charlotte since April 1996. To date, the agency has resettled more than 1500 people, mostly in Charlotte. "The primary mission of HIAS is to assist [those] whose lives and freedom are in danger. HIAS helps people escaping persecution ...; assures resettlement assistance to refugees ... advocates on behalf of refugees ..." HIAS NC, as part of the oldest resettlement agency in the US, serves refugee adults and families from many countries, presently: Bhutan, Burma, Liberia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Vietnam and the Former Soviet Union. These clients include religious and ethnic minorities.

**Q. What does HIAS NC do?**

**A.** HIAS NC services include airport reception, establishing refugees in an apartment, English classes for adults, health care via community agencies, job placement, enrolling children in public schools, providing shopping and transportation help. HIAS NC also serves as a communications link between clients, communities of resettlement, other agencies, and government authorities. The goal of the services and procedures is to assist the refugees in becoming economically self sufficient as



quickly as possible and becoming active participants and contributors to the community.

**Q. What can I do to help?**

**A.** HIAS NC needs "extra hands" and refugees need American friends. Volunteers are needed to drive refugees to health and job appointments as well as to community events; help set up apartments; teach clients to ride the bus; pick up furniture donations; tutor adults with low literacy skills; tutor computer skills; assist the director with record-keeping; coach clients or the citizenship test.

**Q. What else does HIAS NC need?**

**A.** Job leads and donations. Employment team members pre-screen clients for job readiness and skills. Most employers tell us that refugees make honest, loyal workers.

Donations: Checks (made out to HIAS NC); cars in working condition; furniture including beds (mattresses, box springs and frames), chests, dressers, night

stands, sofas, coffee tables, lamp tables, lamps, kitchen tables and chairs, TVs; baby items including baby clothing, high chairs, strollers; play pens; car seats, booster seats and cribs; gently used bed and bath linens; kitchen items including dishes, pots and pans, glasses, flatware; personal hygiene, cleaning and paper items such as soap, shampoo, dish detergent, cleaning supplies, sponges,

napkins, paper towels, tissues, etc.; coats, jackets, hats and scarves.

**Q. How do I contact HIAS NC?**

**A.** Call 704-535-8803 or send an email to [ellen.dubin@hias.org](mailto:ellen.dubin@hias.org) to volunteer, make a donation or learn more about HIAS NC. Call 704-535-8803 or send an email to [thanei.taithio@hias.org](mailto:thanei.taithio@hias.org) to arrange for a furniture pick-up. ☆



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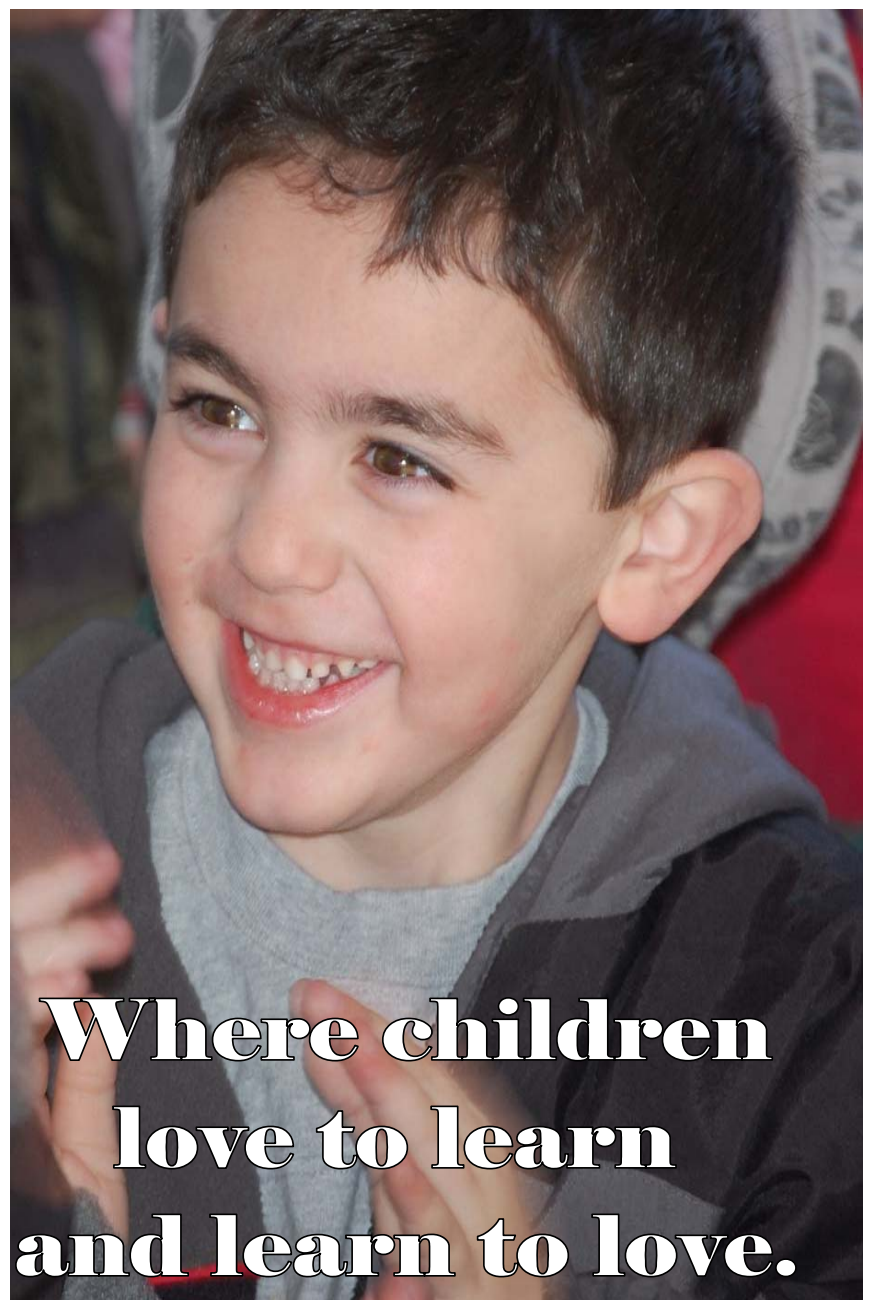
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