



Restoring Dignity  
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*“Great things are brought about, and burdens are lightened  
through the effort of many hands,  
anxiously engaged in a good cause.”  
- M. Russell Ballard*

2022 marked ten years from when Restoring Dignity first started. What began as a single home-makeover in 2012, is now an organization that serves thousands of refugees in Omaha each year. A single vision of what a more dignified future can look like, is now shared by thousands of supporters, who graciously give their time, talent and resources to support refugees in the Omaha area. Ten years ago, the idea of thousands of lives being impacted seemed impossible. But with each passing year, the impossible has become possible.

What started as a small effort to get furniture out to refugee families, grew in the most beautiful way in 2022. At the beginning of the year, Restoring Dignity was given the honor of forming a partnership with The Furniture Project, to create an 18,000 square foot furniture bank in Omaha that would serve families for years to come. The initial push for this furniture bank was in response to the crisis in Afghanistan, with almost 1,000 Afghans being resettled in Omaha. Many people came together to build the infrastructure that is now a fully functioning furniture and household goods warehouse.

This expansive growth tells only one part of the story of Restoring Dignity. In 2022, our Welcome Home Program, in which we teach in-home education classes to new and former refugees, grew by leaps and bounds. By the last week of December 2022, our family educators had taught 1,076 in-home classes! This would have seemed unimaginable back in 2019, when we hired our first contract educator, Paw Bway Htoo, now the sitting director of the program. At the time, we were serving just a few families, in the hopes of making a bigger difference. We had no idea that our education program would grow to impact thousands of people, over the course of a few short years.

Such growth comes with great responsibility. Families continue to be resettled in Omaha, and we are committed to providing supportive services that allow people to rebuild their lives in a dignified manner. Time is of the

essence, and there is no time to waste.

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Here are some highlights from 2022:

- Our Welcome Home Program grew tremendously in 2022! We formed a partnership with the American Red Cross, and launched a second set of classes in June: Home and Fire safety. In these classes, families are taught hands-on, in-home education about fire safety. We install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, teach families how to use fire extinguishers, explain how to recognize the smell of gas, discuss the safety procedure of what to do when gas is smelled, educate about weather, electrical, candles, space heaters, grilling safety and a whole host of other valuable topics! This Home and Fire Safety education is delivered over the course of three classes, in which we use a pre and post test model to ensure that families are sufficiently retaining the information. This allows us to reteach and continue to work with clients until we are positive they have absorbed the content.
- Through the Welcome Home Program we taught 1,076 classes: 779 Healthy Home and 297 Home and Fire safety classes. We impacted a total of 472 families and provided 7,760 cleaning items and 117 complete home/fire safety kits. A total of 2,545 lives were impacted through this program, including the lives of 1,212 children. Our classes were taught in 7 languages, and individuals in our program identified with 25 different ethnicities. 69% of families reported a total combined household income of \$40,000 a year or less. Almost half of program participants reported having an incomplete education experience as a child, in their home countries, due to instability and a lack of educational resources. 18% reported no educational opportunities in their lifetime. 86% of program participants have lived in the USA for more than 5 years.
- We added two amazing staff to our team! Going into 2023, we now have six full-time and nine part-time employees. Of our 15 staff, 12 are former refugees.
- Our Community Donation Center transformed into the co-managed furniture bank, in partnership with The Furniture Project. Through incredible teamwork and many selfless volunteers, we took an empty 18,000 square foot warehouse and turned it into a furniture bank that furnished 728 households in 2022! Through Restoring Dignity's in-person shopping, there were 260 former refugee families who came and picked out items they needed in their homes. Via our partnership with the two refugee resettlement agencies, Refugee Empowerment Center and Lutheran Family Services, 206 new refugee family households were furnished. The Furniture Project provided needed items to 262 households. A total of 3,276 lives were touched through the furniture bank, including 1,770 children! This furniture bank space has been a beautiful example of what happens when people come together and work hard towards a common goal.
- Creighton University stepped up in a HUGE way in 2022 and donated hundreds upon hundreds of pieces of furniture from their dormitory, Gallagher Hall. Items such as mattresses, bunk bed frames, dressers, bookshelves, chairs, recliners and tables went out to families in need. Additionally, 162 high quality desks were donated and given to former refugee families, which impacted 810 people.

- 1,520 unique donors supported the new furniture bank warehouse by dropping off furniture and household items in 2022!
- Volunteers have been, and always will be, the heart that keeps Restoring Dignity going. In 2022, 519 volunteers showed up with full hearts and worked together to get the furniture bank warehouse up and running. A total of 5,968 hours were generously given by Omaha volunteers, at a value of \$178,741.60! Of these amazing people, 95 were consistent volunteers who made a minimum commitment of six months, showing up weekly or bi-weekly, to stock shelves, shop with families, repair furniture and keep the furniture bank functioning. Their effort demonstrates the power of many people working towards a shared goal, which cannot be underestimated. If you volunteered with us: we see you, and we love and appreciate your service more than you will ever know!
- Restoring Dignity formed a partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services and Douglas County Health Department, and hosted 11 mobile Covid-19 and flu vaccination clinics, with interpreters on site! Altogether, 308 Covid vaccines and 120 flu vaccines were administered to members of Omaha's refugee community. We worked hand-in-hand with leaders in the following communities to make these clinics possible: Karen, Karenni, Arabic speaking communities, South Sudanese, Chin and Afghan.
- At the beginning of 2022, we continued mailing masks to refugee families who needed them. In total, we mailed 1,235 masks. We also provided families with Covid-19 testing kits, via a partnership with Douglas County Health Department. And we worked together to ensure that Covid-19 testing video instructions were translated into the languages of the families we work with.
- Restoring Dignity partnered with the Douglas County Health Department to become the provider of emergency language services, in case of emergencies in Omaha. Our goal for 2023 is to continue to nurture this partnership and grow this service, to ensure that non-English speaking individuals have access to critical local emergency updates in their native language.
- Covid-19 video updates continued to be produced in 15 languages and disseminated via our Facebook page and YouTube channel. A total of 49 videos were posted in 2022!
- 23 window air conditioning units were given to 13 families who had no access to cool air during the summer.
- We received 10 housing advocacy referrals in 2022, which led to an impact of 50 former refugees getting assistance for housing issues.
- Restoring Dignity served as the fiscal agent for three refugee-led organizations in 2022: Refugee Beyond Name/Nyampinga Empowering, Nebraska Afghan Community Center and Karenni Gardeners. To financially support these amazing organizations, visit our website: [rdomaha.org/support-local-refugee-led-organizations/](http://rdomaha.org/support-local-refugee-led-organizations/)
- Altogether, Restoring Dignity served 6,154 people in 2022 via one-to-one interactions (ie. in-home classes, a/c installation, furniture shopping and delivery, housing advocacy). When we include the number of views on our Covid-19 update videos and masks being mailed out, that number goes up to 16,720 lives that were touched.

At the heart of *Restoring Dignity* is our **belief** that something can and should be done to meet the needs of Omaha's refugee community through empowerment, education, and advocacy partnerships. There is no better time than now to welcome our newest neighbors to Omaha, to give our refugee families the resources they deserve to thrive.

Thank you for continuing to support Restoring Dignity and the families we serve!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hannah A. Vlach".

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