



**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun Harris
Secretary

DATE: December 14, 2021

TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force

FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: December 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: February 22, 2022
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Microsoft Teams

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This task force has been active in the Tampa area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions and faith community representatives. An average of 70 people attends these meetings on a regular basis. The purpose of these meetings is to increase awareness of the refugee populations, share best practices, build collaborations between agencies, spot trends in refugee populations and needs, facilitate strong communication among refugee services and community providers, get informed about upcoming community events, training, workshops, conferences, etc., at the local, state and national level; discuss refugee program service needs and possible solutions to meeting those needs. Meeting participants also receive updates, information and clarification on new federal and state regulations and policy changes pertaining to refugees. If there are any issues that you would like to include in the agenda, please contact me at the above address.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!

TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

Mission Statement: Helping Refugees to settle, integrate and thrive through support, education, and community.

The meeting was held on Microsoft Teams and Janet Blair and David Draper represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Service Program. A total of **56** individuals were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:36pm.

- The **Mental Health Minute** was given by Nora Bader Program Manager of the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture Program at Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services.

Presentations

- Recognition for **Volunteer of the Year: Eugenie Umurutasate**, Founder & Director of AR4WRM (American Relief for World Refugees and Migrants) who works specifically with refugees from African countries. Eugenie has dedicated countless hours to help refugee families over the past 5 years. We are most grateful for her compassionate service. For more information on her all volunteer run organization go to <https://www.ar4worm.org/>
- Presentation from **Nancy Millan, Hillsborough County's Tax Collector**. Nancy is the first female tax collector elected in Hillsborough County and the first of Hispanic decent to serve in this role. Since taking office in January of 2021, Nancy has made improving customer service, innovation, and office culture her main priorities. Among her many accomplishments this year, Nancy has launched a "Welcome to Hillsborough County" initiative that will assist new residents—both immigrant and non-immigrant—as they obtain a driver's license, register their vehicle or get a state ID. Nancy has worked alongside members of this task force to create this innovative program and is here to share how it will impact the refugee families we serve. For more information on these programs go to the following links for information in English and Spanish. More languages will be added in the near future: <https://www.hillstax.org/out-of-country-new-resident/> <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLX04See2rcJsc8F77i7ae-2xOplqWCLG4>
- Presentation on **Radiant Hands** by Ghadir Kassab, agency director. Radiant Hands has been an active member of the task force since 2017 and has grown to provide a number of innovative employment programs for refugees including Radiant Kitchens Catering Business and Radiant Tailors. They have been assisting Lutheran Services, Florida with Afghan arrivals by providing housing, furniture, meals and volunteer assistance. For more information on this program go to <https://www.radianthands.org/>

Provider & Community Partner Updates:

- The **USF College of Medicine's Refugee Clinic** continues to offer free preventative, primary and urgent care to refugees and asylum seekers who are uninsured. Clinics will be held on Jan. 26, Feb 23 and March 23.
- **Welcoming Week 2021** was a tremendous success in its sixth year. Leadership was provided by Largo & Pinellas Park Libraries. A record-breaking total of 181 baskets were collected for refugee families. To see the film on this project go to https://fb.watch/9Gfsl_HNcX/
- **The Interfaith Thanksgiving Event** is another annual collaborative event spearheaded by Rev. Sally Campbell-Evans and Rev Will Wellman who recruited more faith communities and other partnering

agencies to provide a record breaking \$9,000 in food items and \$9,300 in grocery store gift cards, for a total of **over \$18,300 in food assistance** to the neediest refugee families in Tampa Bay. Other partners included: Congregation Beth-Am, Hyde Park United Methodist Church, Mission Hills Church, Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church, Radiant Hands, Spirit of Life Unitarian Church, Witness & Service Committee of Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church, The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, The Presbytery of Tampa Bay and The Global Impact Committee of Zeta Upsilon Omega Chapter, and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. We are so appreciative to all for this amazing community support.

- **The next task force meeting will be held on Feb 22nd, 2022 at 1:30pm on Microsoft Teams.**