

May 2025



Update to Our Supporters

It is hard to believe it's been 3 years since we met our family in May of 2022. The triplets were 17 years old, and soon they will be 20! They have accomplished so much in a very short time, as have their parents.

The family is currently renting an apartment in New Britain, close to CCSU where the girls are finishing their sophomore year (honor

students of course!). Mom and Dad left their jobs in Manchester soon after they moved to New Britain as they found work at a factory close to their new home. Dad is still employed there; however, Mom did not return after a slowdown in January. She is hoping to return to work soon there or elsewhere. Happily, they have been able to purchase a second used car, so the girls are able to be more independent. We are so pleased that they are completely self-sufficient financially and at this point require very little support from our volunteers. They are a truly remarkable family.

Our Current Environment Necessitates a New Response

Unfortunately, as you are likely aware, the Federal Government has put a stop to refugee immigration. Additionally, many of our volunteers have moved on to other ventures. These two factors combined have led us to the difficult decision to dissolve RERA. Although we only sponsored one family, we are very proud of how we were able to influence this one family's life in such a positive manner. And in return, we received so much gratitude and love and exposure to things we never would have experienced had we not met them. It was truly a wonderful partnership.

The good news is that while RERA itself will no longer exist, thanks to you, our supporters, we are dissolving with money left in our account. We have partnered with the Greater Hartford Refugee Resettlement Coalition (GHRRC) who have identified several families in need of rental assistance due to the cuts by the Federal Government to IRIS and other refugee agencies. One of our volunteers is connected to them as well. We are pleased to be able to provide \$12,500 to GHRRC to use to help these families which helps greatly with their goal of \$20,000 for immediate help.

Thank you for your support over the last three years. If you wish to continue to support refugee families that are in the Hartford area and in need of assistance, please contact Julie Zink: 860-818-2768.

Julie Zink of the GHRRC c/o First Church of Christ, 75 Main St., Farmington, CT 06032.

<https://firstchurch1652.org/>

Introducing you to GHRRC

The following is an update from GHRRC to its own supporters. First, a big **thank you** to all who helped support the Syrian refugee family of five. Thanks to your generous furniture donations, we fully furnished their

apartment and were even able to furnish apartments for three additional families! We also covered their rent for April to help provide a stable start here in Connecticut.

The leadership of GHRRC has been meeting to plan our next steps and we've been in touch with IRIS, the resettlement agency that we cosponsor with.

Unfortunately, IRIS is facing serious challenges. There are 3 main reasons why: (1) a loss of \$4 million in the cut to USAID funding (2) the federal reimbursements that are owed to them since Aug 2024 have not come through, and (3) budget strain from pre-rented empty apartments.

As a result, IRIS has had to reduce staff and close their New Haven and Hartford offices. They're now working from a smaller space in New Haven and continuing to do their best to support refugee families.

Due to the state that IRIS is in, they are backing out of leases that they had co-signed with refugees and are struggling to help newer refugees pay for rent. This is putting strain on these families because some could begin facing eviction.

GHRRC has identified four potential refugee families to help. We have decided to take over support for one family directly. We hope to:

1. Provide rental assistance
2. Help family members find jobs
3. Co-sign their lease to relieve IRIS of financial responsibility
4. Assist with other needs they might have

Our goal is to raise **\$20,000**, which would cover one year of rent if needed. We've already raised about \$4,500. Even if we don't reach the full amount, we'll still provide support, but we will not co-sign a lease. In addition to donations, **we need volunteers** to step in where IRIS no longer can. You don't need special skills—just a willingness to help. This might look like:

- Helping with job searches
- Making calls to doctors or DSS
- Signing up for ESL classes
- Teaching someone how to use the bus or grocery store
- Simply being a friend to help them feel welcome and practice English

To volunteer or learn more:

Contact Julie Zink: 860-818-2768 to help further.

Thank You our RERA Supporters

On behalf of all of us who came together to create RERA and sponsor our family, we could not have done it without the generous support of all of you. In this new time of uncertainty, we are all called to do what we can to make this world a kinder more accepting place even if there are obstacles placed in our path. If you have further questions about RERA you may contact Marilyn Marks, 860-836-7279, mmdogma16@gmail.com. Blessings to all of you for all that you have done.

Marilyn Marks, Co-convenor, Lisa Gleason, Finance Committee Co-chair and
The Reverend Ronald J. Kolanowski, Fiduciary agent for RERA
Rector, St. Peter's Episcopal Church Hebron