

FIRN CLIENT STORIES

Information & Referral

Getting an Asylee on Her Feet. “Bee” is an immigrant from Ethiopia who came to the U.S. in 2001 as an asylee. Because she has very low income, FIRN’s Information & Referral Counselor helps her apply to the food bank every month, every time ensuring that they do not give her pork (for religious reasons). FIRN also helped Bee (who has limited English skills) to apply online for a job at Wal-Mart, breaking down complicated parts of the application so they could be easier to understand; she was subsequently hired. FIRN also referred her to the Health Department for free breast and cervical cancer screenings and to Christian Services for donations of clothing and furniture. Through individual donors at FIRN, she has also received: a queen-size mattress, a set of bowls and glasses, and a table. Grateful for FIRN’s help, she calls FIRN’s Information & Referral Counselor “my daughter.”

Emergency Aid for an Abandoned Family. “Fae”, her husband and their two daughters came to the U.S. as asylees from Iran in 2003. Shortly after their arrival, Fae’s husband abandoned the family, leaving Fae to raise two children by herself. She worked cleaning houses in the area, but when her major client left for summer vacation, she had insufficient income to meet her July 2007 rent. One daughter worked at a store part-time but was only able to contribute a small amount to the family’s monthly expenses. FIRN used \$400 in emergency funds it receives from the Women’s Giving Circle to help Fae pay her July rent, stabilizing the family while connecting her to Pinnacle Career Resources for employment counseling, and assisting her daughter’s job search.

Pooling Resources. “Joy”, a breast cancer survivor from Ethiopia, came to the U.S. first for treatment and was later joined by her husband and their 7 children. She was living in a friend’s house at the time, but they were unable to accommodate the entire family. FIRN’s I&R Counselor helped the family apply for housing and referred them to an Ethiopian caseworker at Community Action Council who spoke their native language (Amharic) and was able to find the family housing big enough to accommodate them. FIRN also gave Joy an invitation to Habitat for Humanity’s “Touchpoints,” a free day of pampering for low-income women, for which FIRN had received some free invitations for our clients. At the event, Joy enjoyed lunch, a massage, makeup class, haircut, and a gift bag with gift cards to stores like Target. The children were referred to Elks Camp Barrett, where they received one free week of summer camp. This was important to the children as they were eager to make new friends and practice English before school started. Through FIRN, the family also received donated items including a refrigerator, television, microwave, coffee table, bedroom set, and lamp. They also participated in FIRN’s Thanksgiving and Christmas program and received food and gift cards.