



MEDIA ALERT

February 10, 2017

Refugee Teen Arrives to San Jose This Afternoon Amid Refugee Ban Lift

Teenage Girl Will Join Foster Care Mother Through Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County Refugee Foster Care Program

What: Young Eritrean refugee arriving midday from Ethiopia, where she lived in a refugee camp alone for many years. She will be welcomed by Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, who will become the legal guardian of the 17 year old. She will be placed with a foster care mother from Berkeley through their Refugee Foster Care program.

Who: - Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
- Rosana Pena, Case Manager, Refugee Foster Care, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County (fluent in Spanish)
- Angela Albright, Division Director, Refugee Foster Care

Why: Catholic Charities' Refugee Foster Care program is the only program in Northern California that serves orphaned refugee children fleeing terror, poverty, and oppression. Now that the recent Executive Order has been halted, the agency can continue to resettle refugees, including children, who seek safe haven in the U.S. The San Jose arrival for the unaccompanied refugee minor is her secondary flight and her original point of entry was Chicago.

When: Friday, February 10, 2017, approximately 12:28 pm

Where: San Jose Airport, American Airlines, Flight #AA1092, arrival 4:58 pm. If you are able to send a reporter, please contact Rosemary Barnes from SJC so she can advise you on parking: (408) 392-1199.

Visuals: Catholic Charities staff "welcome party"; media can videotape the back, side, and front of the refugee, as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) bag that will identify her.

Note: to protect the privacy of the refugee, who is a minor, her face and voice cannot be recorded. There will also be another Eritrean youth there who will welcome the refugee, please do not record her image or voice, as well.

Background

Originally from the Ethiopia, the young girl will join a foster mother from Berkeley through Catholic



Charities' Refugee Foster Care program. As an unaccompanied girl in Eritrea, she was unable to be cared for and kept safe, so she fled to Ethiopia, where she has been living in a refugee camp for many years. She was approved to enter the U.S. after years of vetting through the United Nations.

This teenaged girl was originally supposed to arrive to the program on February 7, but after the Executive Order was signed, her travel was canceled.

"We had no idea when and if we were going to be able to bring her into our Refugee Foster Care program," said Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County.

The foster mother was ready to open her home to the refugee, but was left waiting, not knowing if they would ever become a family. Once the ban was legally challenged and the travel restrictions lifted, the staff at Catholic Charities immediately began advocating for the teenager to be allowed to travel to the U.S. and to the new home she desperately needed.

"Our federal and international partners were able to rush the arrangements and put the teenager on a flight that left on February 8," said Angela Albright, Division Director, Refugee Foster Care. "It's urgent because we need to get her here before the refugee ban could possibly be put back into place."

"We are relieved that this resilient, yet vulnerable, teenager is able to finally join her foster mother and enter our program. We know that every day that a refugee is unable to be resettled – whether they are a child, an adult, or a family – their lives are at risk. We are saving a life today," continued Kepferle.

Since 1979, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County has served over 7,000 refugees, from unaccompanied minors to individuals and families, who seek a safe haven from violence of war and terror, poverty, and oppression. We continue this 38-year tradition through our Refugee Foster Care program, *the only program* in Northern California that serves unaccompanied refugee children fleeing terror, poverty, and oppression.

Catholic Charities currently serves 103 active unaccompanied refugee minors (URM), 22 of them are Muslim and 10 came from countries that are at risk of having long-term bans. The average unaccompanied refugee minor is vetted for two to four years before being able to come to the U.S.

Every year, thousands of children and youths around the world are separated from their families because of war, persecution, and trafficking. These refugee and trafficked children and youth have nowhere to go, are left unaccompanied, and in need of protection, support, and a family. The unaccompanied refugee minors are placed into long-term foster care homes throughout the Bay Area.



About Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County has worked to strengthen families and build economic self-reliance for the poor and vulnerable in the county for more than 60 years. Each year, more than 500 employees and 1,000 volunteers serve more than 40,000 individuals of all cultures and beliefs through 40+ programs at more than 80 sites. Program areas include behavioral health, youth and family services, economic development, employment, financial education, supportive housing, immigration legal services, in-home and long-term care, older adult services, refugee resettlement, refugee foster care, and more. Catholic Charities is working to reduce poverty with social change goals that target the alleviation, prevention, and reduction of poverty in our communities. Learn more at www.catholiccharitiesscc.org.

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