

Creating a Way for KIDS and Young Adults to Be Leaders in Service

In 2017, a group of neighbors saw a need to create meaningful ways to serve alongside our children. From this need, the Love Your Neighbor Club was born. We began helping a local school that taught a portion of our community's refugee children.

As word spread, the number of families offering to help grew to over 250. At the same time, the number of families and organizations needing help also grew. Neighbors and corporations wanted to donate to our club.

We realized our little club could be something much bigger.



Kids sorting & packing school supplies in August

God's vision for community is beautiful:

We have each been given unique gifts. And when we all pull together, each of us with what we've been given, we make up the body of Christ – His Church. (Romans 12:4-8)

Join us as we come TOGETHER to love and help one another.

Radical Love is a non-profit that was founded by Ellie Lebron in May of 2021. Radical Love's mission is to bring together friends, neighbors AND KIDS to love and help one another. **Specifically, we focus on helping local refugee families, senior citizens, and school kids.**

There can be a lot that divides us in this world – politics, geography, how we raise our kids, or where we spend our time and money. Radical Love was created to go above the things that divide us – to a place that UNITES us. To a place of love and hope. A place where community can come together and help one another. The exact place Jesus calls us to be.



Ellie Lebron, Executive Director & Founder

Serving opportunities shared via email

Refugee Families

We believe that we are stronger when we can see our shared humanity and work for a greater good. Our programs for our neighbors who are refugees seek to form relationships that strengthen our community and increase compassion for one another. Our "Friendship & Learning" program brings together adults AND children to build friendships while helping with English.

Senior Citizens

Radical Love helps at a local senior-living complex to unload deliveries from a local food pantry. Kids and adults work together to organize food for the residents. Kids write cards and chalk messages of love and friendship to these valuable volunteers. This Fall will include volunteers playing music and running trivia to bring smiles and build relationships.

School Kids

We help several local schools by providing monthly snack bags, which are discretely placed into the backpacks of kids that need a little extra help with food over long weekends. We hold annual school supply and winter gear collections, book drives, and teacher appreciation events. In the Spring, we plan to help make the outdoor landscape of Nicholson school beautiful and inviting for its students and teachers.

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PO Box 62, Geneva, IL 60134

info@theradicallove.org

Radical Love

Community, Connection, Cultures: One Woman's Resilience through the Journey (re-told by Ellie Lebron)

It was rainy and cold as 9-year-old ChiChi and her family hid in the jungle. They had already fled their home in Burma (also called Myanmar), and the family – five children and their parents – were hiding once again from people who wanted to hurt them. Both ChiChi and her father spiked a fever. Without medicine or doctors to help them, they huddled through the night to stay warm, her mother doing what she could to care for her family. ChiChi recovered, but her father did not.

When ChiChi and her siblings were older, their mother sent them to a Thai refugee camp to attend school. After working very hard to finish school, ChiChi became a teacher at the camp. She began reading about countries that offered safety and opportunity for refugees. One day, she burst into the teacher's office and exclaimed, "Who wants to go to CANADA with me!?" Only one other teacher raised his hand – a quiet and intelligent man named Perkaw.

ChiChi and Perkaw fell in love and were married with their families surrounding them. God blessed them with a son. They began the long application process to find a new home in a new country. Years of interviews, paperwork, background checks, and more interviews followed.

Then word came: The United States had a place for them, but their parents and siblings had to remain behind. A refugee spends an average of **17 years in a refugee camp** before being accepted into a new country, often with families relocating to different countries. Conditions are hard in refugee camps; there is little money, and there is always hunger.



ChiChi and Perkaw in Thailand - 2009

When ChiChi and Perkaw left Thailand with their young son, they had never seen a building taller than one-story. They flew to Dubai and onto Los Angeles. In the Los Angeles airport, everything was new and different – sounds, smells, the language, and how one acquires food and drink. The baby cried with exhaustion and hunger from the 2-day journey. A man approached the couple, and seeing the child was hungry, he gave the baby a green apple. To this day, anytime ChiChi sees a green apple, she thinks of the love and generosity of the stranger, the first American they met, and she gives thanks to God.

The family settled outside of Chicago and began working and learning their new culture. A second baby was born - a little girl. The family found a church, where they could worship in their native language with other Christians, and they began to build a community.

I met ChiChi in the Fall of 2020 through our mutual friend and mentor, Ruth. We quickly realized a shared love for community and connecting people. Together, we planned a COMMUNITY FREE STORE event that November. The store brought together over 300 families – some that had extra household items, clothing and toys, and some that had a need for these things.

Over tea that winter, ChiChi shared a goal: She wanted to learn to write English so she can record her story. ChiChi wants her children and grandchildren to always know where they came from. Many of ChiChi's friends also wanted to learn to speak, read, and write English. To meet that need, we planned Radical Love's "Friendship and Learning" program, which brought together so many neighbors, who are now friends.

In July, ChiChi and Perkaw welcomed their third child. Our community rejoiced with them by throwing a baby shower. It was the first party ever thrown for ChiChi.

Despite persecution, hunger, loss, and all the trials of a new homeland, ChiChi has a FAITH in Jesus that is unshakable. And she has a JOY that is contagious. By American culture's standards, ChiChi might not have as much as others, but her life is FULL of love, friendship and hope. ChiChi inspires me to trust in God – He will always provide, His story is greater than our own – and to love and help our neighbor, with whatever we have been given.



ChiChi - 2008
There are only 2 pictures from ChiChi's youth



ChiChi and her new baby

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Fall 2021

Our Friendship & Learning Program

For 8 weeks this summer, over 130 local refugees, native-speakers (and their children) came together for our "Friendship and Learning" program. Trained teachers led a formal ESL class, and then adults paired to practice new skills with a native-English speaker. Confidence and skills among new English speakers grew, and friendships sparked. Women whose paths would normally never cross, spent hours together encouraging one another with English learning and in life.



Simultaneously, the children met for games, book swaps, and a big service project: The group of children packed 300 snack bags to help their local peers in need.



We plan to host meetups throughout the year and repeat the program next Summer.

Help Fund Our Fall & Winter Initiatives!

We are raising money to purchase winter gear (boots, coats, and accessories) for children in need in our community. We are also raising funds to provide Christmas gifts to senior citizens in need of love and attention this holiday season. If you are able to support this project, please visit www.theradicallove.org/donate, use the enclosed envelope, or scan the QR code to the right.

Partner with Radical Love

Make a Monthly Impact: If you believe in our cause, would you consider becoming a monthly partner? It's an easy and secure one-time set up on our website and will aid with planning and impact.

One-time gifts: We are grateful for your support, either online (QR code) or via mail.

Companies and organizations: We welcome the support of your company! We are a pending 501(c)(3). *All gifts are tax-deductible.*

Our Leadership Team



Board of Directors

- Ellie Lebron, Founder & Executive Director
- Katie Feagans, Secretary
- Jason Lebron, Treasurer
- Austin Newcomb
- Courtney Wilkison

Advisory Council

- Jen Bernal
- Cheryl Pacilio
- Josh Schwede
- Kim Thompson

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Equipping Kids with Needed School Supplies

Over 100 kids gathered in August, each carrying bags and boxes of school supplies to help fellow students in local schools. Many of the kids reached out to friends and neighbors to help in the collection, making this a true community event! Together, the kids sorted, boxed and then filled SIX SUVs with supplies. Everything was delivered to 3 local elementary schools and 2 groups of local refugee friends. "The kindness, the caring, and the compassion from students to other students we may be) who much," shares Principal Jen Bernal.



Feeding the Hungry

Each month, 300 kid-sized bags will be filled with food, and notes of friendship and encouragement written on each bag. These snack bags are delivered to three local elementary schools, where teachers discretely put them into the backpacks of kids who need a little extra help with food, especially over long weekends. "Hunger is a very quiet, but real issue in every community," reports a local social worker.

Different groups sign up for a month of bags to pack; groups range from sports teams, scout groups, school classes, neighbors and clubs of all sorts. If you have an organization that would like to get involved, please visit our website, and click on "Get Involved!"

Testimonials

- "I've noticed a change in my daughter after helping with Radical Love. She's now more actively trying to include kids she doesn't know in things she does." – Tara M.
- "Radical Love helped me improve my English and make friends!" – Eh Deh
- "My perspective of the world is broader because of Radical Love." – Kate H.
- "Radical Love created a community of BELONGING. It met so many spiritual, physical and emotional needs." – Julia S.
- "It's awesome to see kids lead in this way." – Christin P.



Kids are so Capable!

For ideas on ways kids can love and help their neighbors, please check out "Resources" on our website.

A Special Thanks

Radical Love, was created and fueled by prayer and a community's willingness to share its strengths and gifts. A special thanks to: My husband, **Jason**, who is my sounding board, encourager, and true partner in this life. **Jake, Josie, Avery & Sam**, who help with full hearts, and remind me daily of God's big love for all of us. **Chapelstreet Church**, thank you for preaching the gospel truth and love of Jesus, and reminding us that the Church is not a building or a pastor. It is the people (flawed as we may be) who make up the Church. **Ruth Nelson** and **Cheryl Pacilio**, wise friends and advisors, who help me navigate new things, and only laugh with me when I fall on my face. **ChiChi**, my dear friend who reminds me just how beautiful community really is. **Josh** and **Katie Feagans**, with **Feagans Law Group**: amazing lawyers and even better friends. **Austin Newcomb** and **City Publications**, for making this print publication possible. **Lisa Marie Patterson**, who brought our mission to life in logo form. **Leslie Bauman**, who so lovingly put together our publication and print pieces. My editors: **Claire Douglass**, **Kate Hertz**, **Stephanie Rische** & **Kate Twohig**. **Jillian Love** for helping me navigate Radical Love's place in the online world. **Tara Moen** and **Terri Applehans** for taking the most beautiful photos that tell God's story. **Sarah Furnish Ricchio**, who gave me the push I needed when learning new things. Your Mom would have done the same exact thing. **The State Bank of Geneva**, for helping a little non-profit in the banking world. **Symboliq Media** for taking Web content and making it beautiful. **Kathy Byrnes**, my dear friend, mentor and constant encourager, who recently got to go and meet Jesus. This publication is dedicated to your legacy of faith, hope, love and friendship.

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