



RADICAL LOVE

Spring 2026 Newsletter

A Community of Helpers

OVER 500 REFUGEE NEIGHBORS AND VOLUNTEERS GATHER TOGETHER



"Christmas is different now. We had to leave behind our friends, neighbors, and extended family. We left our church building and places we would go to celebrate. There's sadness around Christmas for many of us. But Radical Love's Christmas event - it reminds us that there is still joy." - Neighbor from Venezuela

"CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD" EVENT BRINGS JOY

Cars were parked on every square inch of the parking lot (and if you had 4-wheel-drive, your spot was in the snow!) A saxophone quartet performed the "Charlie Brown" melody as neighbors from all over the world, now living within 10 miles of Geneva, arrived at the party.

EVERY FAMILY PARTNERED

Arriving international families were welcomed in their native language by our Outreach Coordinators, then introduced to a "friend/greeter" for the morning. The greeter led each family to four different stations: The Giving Workshop, Craft Station, Food and Family Photos, and our Care Room, where families picked up snow boots and winter gear, socks and underwear, feminine products, and a Radical Love sweatshirt.

GIVING WORKSHOP

Our international children became the "givers" this year. Based on the recommendations of our Outreach Coordinators, we picked 20 different items (warm slippers, toolboxes, scarves and soaps) and built an Amazon wishlist. Our community and donors helped to fill the list, then high school students wrapped every gift. At the event, every child got to "shop" for the adults in their home, write their name on the "from" line, and bring the gifts home. They even got to pick a gift for themselves!

SHOWCASE: THE WORLD ON STAGE

The second part of our event included talents from around the world. We enjoyed guitar from Rwanda, violin from Ukraine, singing from Mexico, and dancing from Burma. Our Radical Love staff concluded the event by leading everyone in "Joy to the World."



JOIN US

We have many ways to help.

theradicallove.org

Give to Radical Love.



"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."
- Jesus (recorded in Matthew 25: 35-36)



Inside this Issue:
How You Can Help!

theradicallove.org
info@theradicallove.org
PO Box 62, Geneva, IL 60134

"We came together - in peace, joy, and love - at Radical Love." - Neighbor from Ukraine



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

We are a community built on the radical love of Jesus Christ. We continue to point to Jesus because everything we have – the growth of Radical Love, the friendships and bonds formed here, and all of our needs filled - is from Him.



GOOD NEIGHBOR GROCERIES

Great project for individuals & families

Our most recently resettled refugees, who arrived legally and followed all of the rules, had their food benefits cut this fall. In addition to visits at the food pantry, volunteers are delivering a bag of groceries to help fill the gap and feed our neighbors (most have children) as they work to rebuild their lives in America.

"I never imagined Radical Love would be so wonderful,"
- Neighbor from Congo



CARE TEAM

Great project that kids can help prepare!

Her brother was killed in battle in Ukraine. She lives in St Charles. With the help of our Care Team, dinner was delivered to her family for 2 ½ weeks. We are a Radical Love family. Join the Care Team to help with jobs like this one.

"All of us - we are the Radical Love Family. We look out for each other and care for each other. There's always room for more."

- Executive Director & Founder, Ellie Lebron



FRIENDSHIP BACKPACKS

Great project for teams & groups!

In October we began weekly backpack deliveries to 195 local international students (in 9 schools). Each included fresh fruit, care products, and notes of love and encouragement, helping students as they navigate fears and unknowns in our community.

"These backpacks have become a beacon of hope and a symbol of love in our community - not just for the students, but for our teachers and staff too," shares a local principal.



GAME DAY & LEGAL CLINIC

Our legal refugees have been under attack across the country. To be prepared, Radical Love hosted a "Know Your Rights and Protect Your Family" Forum. Lawyers from 3 legal clinics and law firms joined us to share information, answer questions, and discuss next steps. While parents and high school students learned, the children played American board games. Everyone was fed breakfast and lunch, and 3 buses were needed to bring people to the event.



SNACK BAGS

Great project for teams & groups!

Every month, we funnel 350 snack bags, filled with food items, to kids at our partner schools and housing complexes. Notes of love, friendship and encouragement are written on each bag. These bags help feed kids over long weekends or while one is waiting to speak with a guidance counselor.

"I've seen the smiles on kids' faces as they're handed one of these bags. It's such a simple thing, with a powerful impact," shares a local guidance counselor.

YOU CAN HELP!

Give to Radical Love.



theradicallove.org



Follow Us:
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"The work they're doing with refugees is the kind of soul-level healing the world needs more of,"
- Community Partner

SUMMER FRIENDSHIP & LEARNING PROGRAM

Sign-up NOW OPEN

June 12, 19, 26 and July 10, 17, 24



Join us for our 5th summer of FUN and FRIENDSHIP. Helpers and refugee neighbors from around the world come together to hear important topics, practice English, and get to know one another. Adults and high school students help with greeting, food, supporting different stations, kids programs and childcare. Kids of all ages participate (childcare and kids' program for helpers' and participants' kids).



SERVE DAYS

In many cultures, helping neighbors is woven into everyday living. Come work alongside our resettled refugee neighbors as we pack food (with Feed My Starving Children) and serve dinner at the local food pantry. Sign-up on our Volunteer Portal.



TEACHER APPRECIATION DAY

We partner with 19 schools and housing complexes in St Charles, Geneva, Batavia, Aurora and Montgomery. In February, we delivered donuts and notes of gratitude to our partner teachers and staff.



FRIENDSHIP PARTNERS (NEW)

Can you be a friend to a refugee neighbor? This new program will partner people together to help navigate the challenges of living in a new country. A Radical Love staff member will mentor and guide you as this new friendship develops.



"He defends the causes of the fatherless, and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing."
- Deuteronomy 10:18

SUMMER FUNDRAISER

Friday, August 7, 2026

Acquaviva Winery, Maple Park, IL

The evening includes dinner and drinks, live and silent auctions, and stories and music from our beautiful refugee neighbors.

Tickets on sale NOW on our website (we sell out this event every year!)



MEN'S EVENTS

Radical Love partners with Hilltakers, a local men's group, to put on our men's events (April 24 and October 16). Join us as we gather men from around the world to build community and have fun.

ONE-TIME VOLUNTEERS

Receive an alert when a special project comes up. Projects include preparing our newsletters for mailing, delivering teacher appreciation items, blowing up soccer balls, and much more! Help when you can!



GIVE TO RADICAL LOVE!

Every dollar stays local. Current funding needs for 2026:

- Buses for the year: \$21,000 (\$350 helps one person come for a year)
- Summer Program: \$46,800 (\$2000 ensures every child takes home a basketball and soccer ball; \$100 feeds a family of 6 all summer)
- Bibles & Devotionals: \$5,000 (we share God's word in 6 languages!)

Ways to Give:

- (1) Online at www.theradicallove.org/donate
- (2) Check (please use the enclosed envelope)
- (3) We can now accept STOCK and PLANNED GIVING donations via our Radical Love Endowment

Visit www.theradicallove.org/donate



Our Team

Board of Directors:



TJ Bean
Board Member



Joseph Dadara
Board Member



Ellie Lebron
Founder & Executive Director



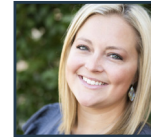
Jason Lebron
Board Member



Melanie Mannon
Board Member



Austin Newcomb
Board Member



Abby Saloga
Board Member



Jody Sexton
Board Member

Advisory Council:



Jen Bernal
Advisory Council



Kate Derrico
Advisory Council



Cheryl Pacilio
Advisory Council



Sara Emmerson
Advisory Council

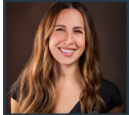


Katie Feagans
Advisory Council

Staff:



Ellie Lebron
Founder & Executive Director



Amy Hogan
Director of Outreach



Viki Jeffrey
Director of Programming



Courtney Wilkison
Director of Operations



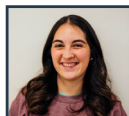
Priscilla Adela
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks Swahili & French



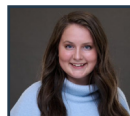
Victoria Barreto
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks Spanish



Faith Chepkwony
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks Swahili



Gianna Coffey
Relationship Coordinator



Chloe Eckley
Photographer



ChiChi Htoo
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks Karen



Jake Lebron
IT Coordinator



Maria Muonza
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks French, Swahili +4 more languages



Ashley Newcomb
Resource Coordinator



Lyndsey Nicodem
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks Spanish



Maryna Sulii
Outreach Coordinator
Speaks Russian & Ukrainian



Radical Love

We have become a trusted friend to over 500 resettled refugee neighbors.

We continue to reflect the radical love of Jesus as we share: You are seen, known, valued, and loved by both God and our Radical Love Family.

Join us as we work to love the neighbors that God places on our path!

Learn more!
Go to:



theradicallove.org

Our resettled refugee neighbors wait years (often decades) to be resettled in the U.S. They endure a long and legal process to be admitted to our country; this process includes interviews, medical and background checks conducted by the U.S. State Department, the FBI, the CIA, and the United Nations.



REFUGEE STATISTICS

More than 117 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, war or violence.



THE U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

In 1980, with full bipartisan support, congress passed The Refugee Act of 1980. The first refugee legislation was enacted in 1948, to help resettle the World War II refugees.



WHO IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion.

HOW LONG DO THEY WAIT AS A REFUGEE?

Being selected for resettlement is often likened to “finding a needle in a haystack.” The average refugee living in a camp waits 17 years to be selected. Many people live their entire lives as a refugee.

CAN A REFUGEE BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?

Yes, all refugees are required to apply for a green card to become a permanent resident after one year in the United States. After five years of residency, they are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.

CAN REFUGEES LEGALLY WORK IN THE UNITED STATES?

Yes, upon arrival in the U.S., refugees receive employment authorization and become employed as soon as possible so they can support themselves. They repay all of their travel costs to get to the U.S.



WHERE IN THE WORLD

Countries represented at Radical Love include Burma, Thailand, Iran, Nepal, Ukraine, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Venezuela, Angola, and Ecuador.



LEGAL REFUGEES BEING DETAINED

Over the past few months, legal refugees in our country have been detained. They went through all proper channels to enter and live in the United States. World Relief is a trusted partner of Radical Love and a national organization leading advocacy for refugees. We stand together for our refugee neighbors.



HOW DOES RADICAL LOVE WORK ALONGSIDE OUR REFUGEE NEIGHBORS?



Radical Love exists to build relationships with our resettled refugee neighbors and to point neighbors towards trusted resources in our community. We have 7 Outreach Coordinators on staff, who speak a combined 10 languages (6 of the 7 were refugees themselves). They connect with our refugee neighbors, get to know them and their families, pray with them and invite them to our events and programs.

“Why does it matter?”

I got asked this question recently – why does the work we do at Radical Love matter?

When we began our little “Love Your Neighbor Club” in 2017, we sought out a school in Aurora, where many refugee children attended. We worked with the principal there to collect needed items (school supplies, winter gear, books, food for long weekends). It was – and still is - important work; we now help 19 schools and housing complexes fill similar needs.

We were collecting things to help people, but I never met the people we were helping.

I had never met an actual refugee.

In 2019, I met Hser Htoo, a resettled refugee from Burma. More friendships with refugee neighbors followed - ChiChi, Maria, Natalie, and Nazareth; the list goes on. From these friends, who grew up on different continents on the other side of the world, I have gained wisdom, grace, and deepening of faith.

Our refugee neighbors demonstrate how to slow down in life – to see the person and moment that God has put right in front of me.

I’ve witnessed how our refugee neighbors truly live in community, sharing everything that they have with one another. A “we over me” culture. It’s how we’re all supposed to live.

I’ve learned that what we share in common as humans, spouses, parents, and neighbors is ultimately the same: We want a place that is safe to raise our kids; we desire access to healthy food, education and medical care for our families; and we all just want to belong; to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

Perhaps the most important thing I have learned from my friends, who are resettled refugees, is a deep reliance on God. I’ve grown up – and continue to live with – so many things that make life *comfortable*. My friend ChiChi fled war when she was just a little girl. Her Dad died and she grew up in a refugee camp without her parents there. She came to the United States as a legal refugee, speaking little English and rebuilt a life here. ChiChi reminds me (often), “We trust in God, and we pray to God. He will continue to protect us.” It’s never been easy for ChiChi, *but her faith in God has been constant*. There’s a joy in her that’s undeniable; I believe there’s a connection.



Ellie Lebron (Executive Director) and ChiChi Htoo (Outreach Coordinator) have worked together for the past 5 years to build Radical Love.

We founded Radical Love in 2021 to be a place to *bring people together*; a place where we can see our shared humanity, a place where we can love our neighbors. People whose paths would normally never cross are coming together, beautiful friendships are forming, neighbors are helping one another and learning from each other. Our children are following our lead. The world needs this work now more than ever.

Our community is stronger because of our international neighbors; *together we built Radical Love*. May we continue to come together to reflect the radical love of Jesus in all we do.

Ellie Lebron
Founder & Executive Director
Radical Love

