

# Upstate Folk Art Partnership Program Guide



## **Cause for Action:**

- Since 2000, more than 10,000 refugees have made Syracuse their home. In that same time, poverty in Syracuse has risen steadily. Many of the areas that saw the highest jumps in concentrated poverty were Northside neighborhoods where large populations of refugees have resettled.
- A majority of refugees are from Burma, Bhutan and Somalia; however, Sudanese, Congolese and Iraqi refugees have also resettled on the city's Northside in recent years.
- Refugees have high unemployment rates in the early years of their life in the U.S.
- Social activities like sewing classes, cooking, etc help encourage interaction between cultures and learn about the new cultures.

## **Where is the program?**

The program is located at Refugee & Immigrant Self-Empowerment (R.I.S.E.), formerly known as the Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA), 312 Burt Street, Syracuse, NY 13202.

## **Who does the Upstate Folk Art Partnership serve?**

The program serves the women from the diverse refugee and immigrant communities in Onondaga County.

## **Who does the RISE program serve?**

RISE works to ease the transition of refugees and immigrants who resettle in Onondaga County. The group started in 2004 and set its goal as education. They assist with homework, teach ESL classes, interpretation, case management, and job placement services. All of these things are done in order to promote self-sufficiency through employment, education, and economic development.

## **How does the program provide for this population?**

The Upstate Folk Art Partnership is an intercultural learning exchange program that promotes the preservation of refugee folk art, tradition, music/dance and handcrafts (i.e. yarn and beading work), and enables interaction between refugees and students from Upstate Medical University. This is a cross-cultural exchange based on mutual respect/values and helping and empowering the refugee women from different cultures to come together and support each other.

## **What would I do as a student?**

Students work with women on crafts and with children on artwork. Students also participate with activities including cooking, crocheting, beadwork, and other cultural art forms. Handmade jewelry and artwork are sold to provide some income to the families.

**How often would I serve?**

There is no required number of hours to serve at this site. Upstate students meet at the RISE 2-4 times per month for 2 hours each time.

**What are the community impacts?**

The program is intended to provide fun, interactive activities that allow RISE visitors to learn about each other and the Upstate students that participate in the program to learn about the refugee and immigrant population. These activities provide informal opportunities for discussion, education and friendship across cultures, which may help refugee and immigrant persons feel more welcome and increase their ability to be self-sufficiency in their new country.