



Outlook for the year ahead

Dear friends and supporters,

2025 marks the ten-year anniversary of IWR's founding. We began as a grassroots movement that emerged in response to the Syrian refugee crisis and have grown into an established local non-profit, working alongside more than 250 people from more than 15 countries. Today, the premise of welcoming newcomers in need into our community remains highly relevant.

A few days from the inauguration of a president who has disparaged immigrants, looking to the year ahead rightly evokes unease for many of us in this community. We remain determined in our work and with your help, we are adapting and continuing our efforts to empower our refugee partners. In the coming months, this will include shifting forms of direct support, as well as sensitive community building and advocacy work. To aid with these efforts, we are excited to share that we are developing an updated IWR logo and website... launch date coming soon! As we approach our 10th anniversary, I want to thank every member of this community who has helped in some way to make the daunting task of resettling in Tompkins County a more positive and inclusive experience. We could not do this work without you!

Sincerely,

Casey Verderosa, IWR Executive Director

'Know Your Rights' presentations



Image courtesy of www.freepik.com

Out of an abundance of caution and in light of the incoming administration's desire to deport large numbers of immigrants, including those legally residing in the US, IWR held the first of several 'Know Your Rights' presentations for IWR families and individuals on January 4.

Twenty-three of IWR's refugee partners attended the session, from four language groups, and translators were present. Among other advice, attendees were informed about their rights under the US constitution should they come into contact with an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer, which documents to carry with them at all times to prove they are legally allowed to be in the US, and how to contact an attorney should they be detained.

Request for sponsors

An Ithaca community member from South Sudan is looking for five people to form a sponsor group to help him be reunited here in Tompkins County with two of his sisters and his girlfriend through the [Welcome Corps](#) program. Are you interested in becoming a refugee sponsor? If so, please contact Casey Verderosa at caseyv@ithacawelcomesrefugees.org to express interest or ask questions. Sponsors can expect support from the women's relative and from

IWR. For the second year in a row, South Sudan is at the top of the [International Rescue Committee's Emergency Watchlist](#); circumstances for women are especially desperate, as instances of gender-based violence are soaring.

Global Roots Play School now enrolling

Spaces are available at IWR's part-time program for young children! You can learn about the ethos and background of Global Roots Play School in our [earlier story](#). For anyone interested to enroll, please visit [this form](#).



**GLOBAL ROOTS
PLAY SCHOOL
HAS OPENINGS!**

Enrolling now: family centered international preschool for children aged 18 months to 5 years. A program of Ithaca Welcomes Refugees, providing a soft landing in Tompkins County.

-  Monday to Thursday
-  9 AM to 12 PM
-  402 North Aurora Street Ithaca, NY 14850

To express interest, fill out the form here:
<http://globalrootsplayschool.org/enroll>



(607) 398-0467
director@globalrootsplayschool.org
www.globalrootsplayschool.org

Current needs

We are looking for a king-sized mattress in good condition for a family who recently moved into their apartment.

We welcome donations of grocery store gift cards for IWR families.

For the most up to date information on needs, check the [Current Needs](#) on the IWR website or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [X](#).

For questions about needs or to donate, contact IWR Programs Coordinator Leigh Bacher at leighb@ithacawelcomesrefugees.org.

End of Year Appeal update

We are blown away by your generosity in response to our 2024 End of Year Appeal! Individual donations to this appeal are now totaling \$53,529 and counting! This response has been matched at the maximum level by an anonymous supporter who pledged up to \$50,000 in match funding for this appeal. With your help, we begin the year in a strong position to provide flexible support to our refugee partners in a time of uncertainty. Our sincere thanks to all contributors for making this possible!

Winter fundraisers shore up support



In the run up to the holidays, a number of local groups and businesses chose to organize fundraisers in support of IWR programs. We are in awe of the creativity and kindness put into these efforts! With special thanks to:

- Argos Inn for holding a solstice dance party and donating \$1230 from the proceeds;
- Wide Awake Bakery for launching a 'Bread Not Bombs' T-shirt sale (pictured), raising \$1200 in its opening week and ongoing in their Franklin St. store;

- Debbie Benzer and Yvonne Fogarty, who organized the 3rd Jewelry Fundraising event, raising \$10,242 for IWR and Global Roots Play School. Thanks also to Kip Wilcox, Anslie deWolf, Randi Kepecs, Deborah Dietrich, Jae Sullivan, Kathleen Cocciotti, Kathleen Hunt, Carmen Blankenship, Roberta Sibley, Laura Lewis, Ann Stork, Amalia Weinberg, Nancy Siegele, Sherry Golden and family who helped on the day, and to all the people who generously donated jewelry!

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