

## 2006 Highlights: A Year of Welcome

Interfaith Refugee Ministry enjoyed another year of impressive accomplishments under its mission to help refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, regain hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut's communities.

### Service: Ensuring a Strong Start for New Americans

- IRM moved to a new office with a big classroom to host English language classes and a playroom for children to participate in a school readiness program. The new space has also allowed IRM to enlarge its food pantry, expand the legal clinic, and host a variety of workshops and meetings.
- Our employment counseling and training resulted in over twenty-five refugees starting new jobs in hotel housekeeping, painting, light manufacturing, distribution, construction, and food service. Our employment support also encouraged an additional thirty refugees to find better jobs and improve their employment situation.
- The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven awarded IRM a multi-year grant to improve and expand the Refugee Education and Family Service (REFS) program. REFS promotes academic achievement and social adjustment for schoolchildren and their parents. The grant allows us to include immigrant children in the program.



### Outreach & Partnering: Raising Awareness of Refugee Resettlement

- Yale's PIER program invited a refugee from Somalia and an asylee from the Democratic Republic of Congo to speak about their experiences to teachers from all over the US.
- IRM collaborates with a wide range of local groups including the New Haven Legal Assistance Center, CT Works, Citywide Youth Coalition, and the Clifford Beers Clinic to help refugees and immigrants acculturate and become self-sufficient and productive members of our communities.

### Community: Cultivating a Capable and Dedicated Staff at IRM

- Four new staff members have joined IRM to expand our services in housing, employment, healthcare, addressing special case management needs, and volunteer coordination.
- Our staff communicates with newly arrived refugees in Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic, Dari (spoken in Afghanistan), and Lingala (spoken in West Africa).
- Staff and interns have joined IRM through Connecticut's Public Allies program, the Yale Divinity School, and the School for International Training. Their enthusiasm invigorates our service.

### A new name in 2007: IRM will become IRIS.

In 2007, to coincide with our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are changing our name to **IRIS, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services**. The new name more accurately describes our mission and includes reference to immigrants. We also like the image and meaning of IRIS—a flower signifying faith and hope, and a word that in several languages means rainbow. We are working on a new logo that we will share with you as soon as it is completed.