

Help IRIS with a House Party!

IRIS has resettled 1,000+ refugees since 2014 and will continue to serve these new Americans, as well as those still arriving in 2017. Yet, with a \$250,000+ cut in federal funding due to the Executive Order we need all the support we can get right now. Hosting a house party is a great way to raise money for IRIS while educating your friends and colleagues about the issue of refugee resettlement.

IRIS can help you host a party by supplying a speaker, along with brochures, donation envelopes and other materials. We can't help with any money toward party expenses. We need every dollar to go toward our services right now.

A fundraising house party can be as simple as a potluck, barbecue or pool party on a warm day – or as formal as a wine-and-cheese gathering with live music and dancing. The goal is connect with friends, colleagues and loved ones and raise awareness about refugee resettlement and IRIS's needs.

We greatly appreciate any and all support!

Here are some other fundraising party ideas:

- Themed potluck
- Specialty food tasting
- Local craft beer tasting
- Bowling party at a local bowling alley
- Single-malt Scotch tasting
- "Giving party" for a wedding, birthday or anniversary

If you believe in IRIS's mission of resettling refugees and want to spread the word, you've got all you need to host a successful fundraiser. **Let's get started!**



Planning Your Party

1. Set a date. Give yourself at least 6 weeks to plan and invite guests (invites should, ideally, go out 4-6 weeks before the date). Also, check with IRIS to be sure your date will work: We'd love to send a senior IRIS representative to tell your guests in person about our refugee resettlement efforts. We want to help!
2. Draft a party plan: Schedule the evening, allowing time for guest to arrive and socialize, hear from an IRIS representative and then hear a fundraising appeal. Here's a typical party plan:
 - 7-7:30 pm: Guests arrives and enjoy drinks and snacks
 - 8-8:30 pm: IRIS representative gives a short presentation, shows a 5 minute video and answers questions from guests.
 - 8:30-9 pm: Fundraising appeal followed by conversation and socializing.
3. Invite people: Send out invitations to your friends, colleagues and family members – a good general rule is to invite about four times as many people as you expect to attend. Social media invites via Facebook are great; also, check out Evite for free email invitations or Eventbrite for ticketing.

Some tips on invites:

- Be sure to mention in your invitations that this is a fundraising event for IRIS.
- Ideally you should donation amounts or goals – it leads to success, be bold!
- Let people know your own personal connection to refugees and or why you feel strongly about supporting IRIS. "I saw the footage of refugees risking their lives in rafts and I felt I had to do something."
- Detail the evening's schedule and when the IRIS presentation will start.
- If you're sending a social media or email invitation, consider creating a Crowdrise page (it's super quick!) to better track donations. IRIS is an approved charity on Crowdrise. For print invitations, include IRIS's website address for donations.
- Send personalized Facebook or email invitation to guests who you think would be most receptive to supporting IRIS. Evites are great, but sometimes get lost in guests "promotions" tab. Plan to make follow-up calls if you use Evite.
- A week or so before the party, call those invited who have not already sent an RSVP. Remind them about the party – successful house parties are typically the result of the host or hostess making a reminder call or sending a personalized reminder email.
- Send a brief email reminder to those who have RSVP'd a week or so before event to thank them (and remind them) that they're coming!

Sample Invitation:

**Join Us for a Fundraising House Party
for IRIS – Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services**

Friday, Nov. 2, 2016, at 7 pm.

At Lisa & Jim's, 555 Main, Stratford

Watching refugees fleeing war zones, risking their lives and those of their children to get to safety has made me ask – what can I do?

Americans are helping refugees right here in communities around Connecticut, with the help of IRIS – Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services in New Haven.

On a shoestring budget and using donated resources, IRIS welcomes refugees when they first arrive with a furnished apartment and an array of services – ESL classes, school enrollment for children, job search and more. IRIS also manages 40+ volunteer groups in towns around Connecticut who have personally taken on resettlement of a refugee family in their own town.

I strongly believe in the work IRIS is doing and I'd like to them with financial support, money that is much needed as they manage to serve the record-setting influx of Syrian refugees they welcomed last year, while enduring federal budget cuts.

I'm asking my friends and colleagues to join me in donating to this great organization and show their support for refugees. Please join me and Jim at our house to hear from IRIS about their work and join me in giving to this important cause.

Find out more about IRIS or donate early at [your Crowdrise page to IRIS].

Party day!

Be sure to contact IRIS Director of Community Engagement, Ann O'Brien (aobrien@irisct.org) a few weeks in advance to obtain any brochures or donation envelopes you might need. Ann can also provide information and materials on specific topics like refugee healthcare, education and cultural orientation.

- Before guests arrive, layout IRIS materials and a sign-up sheet for emails for IRIS updates (IRIS never sells, shares or trades emails).
- When it's time for the IRIS presentation, the host or hostess should introduce them and offer a personal statement about why you support IRIS.
- After the IRIS presentation, a third person known to the guests, like a spouse or good friend, should make a fundraising appeal and direct guests' attention to donation envelopes or a computer that with the Crowdrise page or IRIS homepage available. It's nice to have a physical bowl to hold envelopes and slips of paper representing credit card donations and announce a general total of donations. Remember, every bit helps!
- Thank your guests copiously and give them a concrete idea of what their donations will go to. For example, \$500 can help a family pay rent when a wage-earner falls ill, a \$100 donation can pay for a monthly bus pass that will take a refugee father to work and \$50 can pay for school supplies for a child enrolling in school.

More questions?

We can connect you to others who have hosting fundraising house parties for IRIS to answer specific questions about how to plan and host these events – and how to painlessly ask your friends for money! Contact Ann O'Brien (aobrien@irisct.org) and she'll put you in contact with a helpful mentor.



Every dollar counts and IRIS thanks you for your support!