



**Global Refuge**  
**Bernthal Legacy**  
**Society**



**The Bernthal Legacy**  
**Society ensures your**  
**spirit of generosity**  
**carries on.**





## Dear Friends of Global Refuge,

We all have had people in our lives who have helped us — our parents, teachers, coaches, pastors, and friends. We don't go at this life alone. I think back to the support my parents received from their new Baltimore neighbors after fleeing civil war in Sri Lanka. Each moment of kindness coalesced to allow my family to thrive and live the American dream.

Your investment in Global Refuge's work as members of the Bernthal Legacy Society is a testament to what makes our nation truly unique. Because of your unwavering commitment, more families who may be seeking refuge, sanctuary, and community will be given the welcome that makes all the difference.

From all of us at Global Refuge, thank you for your generosity.

With gratitude,

*Krish Vignarajah*

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah  
President & CEO



We are indebted to your dedication and support for the vision and mission of Global Refuge! You are highly valued in our work and partnership of welcoming the stranger.

Whether that is a refugee who has long awaited a chance to build a new life after leaving their home country because of war, famine, violence, or persecution or a family at the southern border desperate to find a way for their children to live safely, you are part of this long welcome.

Your decision and membership in the Bernthal Legacy Society also gives hope for those seeking refuge for generations to come. By including Global Refuge in your legacy and estate planning, the seed of hope will grow forward as you have exercised the privilege to determine the final distribution of your estate. We are most grateful to live out that trust in our mission and vision of today and tomorrow. Thank YOU! We celebrate you and the Bernthal Legacy Society with your stories of inspiration and those of individuals and families now as new Americans.

You are a blessing!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Nelson Chase". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

**Beth Nelson Chase, CFRE**  
Director of Major and Planned Giving



I know that I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me. I honor and value the legacy of welcome that began over eight decades ago, when Global Refuge was just getting off the ground. And thanks to your long-term investment through planned giving, you are making future work possible.

We know there is no greater commitment you can make to an organization than including that organization in your estate plans. We are forever grateful for your compassion and trust in us. While you may not see or know the individuals your gift will impact, please know that you are continuing the legacy of welcome that truly defines what's best in us.

With grateful hearts,

**Andrew G. Steele**

Chief Development and Mobilization Officer



## About the Bernthal Legacy Society

The August Bernthal Legacy Society was established by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (Global Refuge) to honor and pay tribute to a tireless advocate and spokesperson for refugees around the world.

Rev. Dr. Bernthal served on the Global Refuge Board for almost 30 years and as the board chair for 19 years. As the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida, he guided his congregation in resettling hundreds of refugees. Dr. Bernthal's advocacy and support for refugee resettlement has influenced many other pastors and congregations throughout the United States to become involved in this ministry.

Dr. Bernthal and his wife, Mildred, came to Winter Haven in 1956. As a new graduate of Concordia Seminary, Dr. Bernthal was assigned to a small mission church with 17 members. By the time he retired in 2000, the congregation had grown to over 2,000 members. While pastor at Grace Lutheran in Winter Haven, Rev. Dr. Bernthal also established three new mission congregations in his ministry that became vital to refugee resettlement.

Dr. Bernthal served as president of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1963-1974. He was a member of the Board of Directors of Valparaiso University and the Lutheran Music Program. He also served as board chair for many years for Lutheran Services of Florida. Dr. Bernthal retired as senior pastor of Grace Lutheran Church on July 17, 2000. He and Mildred remembered Global Refuge with a generous legacy gift to continue their ministry to refugees in the future.

# Meet Our Donors

Fourteen-year-old Nelly Simmons, her 23-year-old sister Helen Hoehl, and their parents, Jacob and Anna Gurguing, arrived in the U.S. from Poland in 1952 after spending time in a German refugee camp post-WWII. Global Refuge paid for their passage, and the family was sponsored by a Lutheran congregation and the community of Mifflin, Ohio.

Nelly, Helen, and their family never forgot the incredible ways the whole community assisted the family, from helping their father attain employment to supporting Helen's and Nelly's educations. Though the family eventually moved to Detroit, MI, and both Nelly and Helen married and lived in various places around the U.S., Mifflin was always close to their hearts. In 2002, Helen wanted to celebrate and thank the community that welcomed and supported their family in those first years by throwing a party for the whole town.

Nelly shared that Helen had such a passion for (then) Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service that her last wishes included a special gift for the organization. She also designated a portion of her estate to express her gratitude for the opportunity to come to the U.S. She credits the organization we now know as Global Refuge as instrumental in her family's long-term welcome and in making their lives of abundance and grace possible.





## Meet Our Donors

"I was first motivated to support Global Refuge by the example of my father, who had made arrangements for his entire life insurance benefit to be given to charitable organizations he supported. As his executor, supported by my five siblings and their spouses, I wrote a check to (then) Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, one of the charities that meant a lot to him.

A few days before my father's death, we were able to read to him a letter from my youngest sister:

*Dad, you have taught all your children the importance of sharing the gifts that we have been given by God. You modeled that in your faithful stewardship throughout the years, not only through regular giving to our church but also through additional gifts to all of these same organizations over the years. You never were what might be considered rich, monetarily speaking, but you gave proportionally because you understood that all of what we have comes from God. And so you were rich indeed. Thank you for that witness to us and thank you for the care that you took to make your wishes known in advance. We love you and look up to you with awe and thanksgiving.*

Thirteen years later, I am still inspired by that example of stewardship, but I have also been influenced by my husband's thoughts and feelings about support for organizations that engage in the battle against hatred and poverty. As we do our own planning for what will happen to our assets after we are gone, we want to help meet the needs of people displaced by political conflict, economic hardship, or fear for their own safety. These newcomers — people who have different cultures and religions — are so often treated as people to be feared rather than helped. We trust that Global Refuge will turn our planned gift into effective support for vulnerable migrants and refugees, to help them restart their lives in an unfamiliar place, with the ultimate goal of becoming citizens."





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# Our Impact

Zarmina, a former refugee from Afghanistan, was working as an actress on a major CBS sitcom when she heard the news of the fall of the Afghan government to the Taliban. She immediately sprang to action, becoming one of Global Refugee's all-Afghan staff at our temporary field office in Northern Virginia.

Though she had never worked in case management, Zarmina remembered what it was like when she and her family were welcomed into the United States as refugees.

"I was helped when we came 34 years ago, and I knew I would love to do the same for the incoming Afghan refugees. And that's how it started."

Zarmina admits that the hours are long and the work is complicated, but she never regrets her snap decision to help.

"Every day is different," she says. "Every day there's a different challenge. Every day there's a different need. We shed tears, we laugh...every single

"I was helped when we came 34 years ago, and I knew I would love to do the same for the incoming Afghan refugees."

– Zarmina, former Afghan refugee



minute, every single second, I'm grateful for the opportunity."

Her proudest moment, she says, has been watching the Afghan arrivals she has worked with become more comfortable and confident as they start their new lives.

"One of my clients is a widow with two children. When she initially arrived, she was so scared. I remember when I called her and said, 'I need you [at the office]. I'm going to send you an Uber,' and she said 'I'm not coming because I'm so scared. I don't want to ride the Uber by myself.'"

Zarmina smiles at the memory.

"Now, she just goes and comes back all by herself. She opened a bank account. She's applying for jobs now. It's such a success story, and I'm so proud of her — as a woman and as an Afghan — and I'm happy that I was able to participate in her success. It makes me so happy to see my people thriving."



# Our Impact

Julienne is a former refugee from Rwanda with five children. When she enrolled in Global Refuge’s economic empowerment programming, which is designed to help new Americans not simply survive, but thrive, she had a job as a caregiver in a nursing home making barely more than minimum wage. After working with Global Refuge staff, she was able to secure a career as a Community Support Worker for pregnant women and new mothers, many of whom are former refugees themselves. Julienne now makes a comfortable living and, equally as important, feels a sense of fulfillment in her work.

“I started working with Carla, the program manager, and she helped me with the application. I was hesitating because of the language and because my bachelor’s degree was from Africa, but she helped me prepare, and that’s how I got this job. I’m so thankful to Global Refuge,” she said. “Now, I love my job because I’m helping moms with babies. When I came [to the U.S.], I had four children and it was so hard. Now, I get to help them be a mother and do what I know.”



**Global Refuge’s economic empowerment programming helps refugees and immigrants not simply survive, but thrive in their new lives.**







Visit [globalrefuge.org/BernthalLegacy](https://globalrefuge.org/BernthalLegacy)  
to learn more or join the  
Bernthal Legacy Society!

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