

Amplify

IC group offers aid to Afghan refugees

With more than 600 Afghan refugees in Iowa seeking resettlement, Iowa City sponsor circle Afghan Allies is seeking to aid an incoming Afghan family in need.

Simone Garza
News Reporter

When the U.S. pulled military support from the Afghan government in August 2021, the Taliban, a fundamentalist extremist group, quickly gained control of the country, displacing over 500,000 refugees.

Now, there are over 75,000 Afghan refugees in the U.S. seeking a new home and stability. States like California and Texas welcome Afghan refugees. In Iowa, a November 2021 report from Iowa Public Radio showed that 600 Afghan refugees have resettled in the Des Moines metro.

But refugees' struggles are far from over when they reach the states. Few affordable housing options are available and there is a lack of medical assistance for severe conditions, like tuberculosis. Proper access to food and

proper preliminary financial government support is scarce.

Iowa City organization Afghan Allies seeks to alleviate some of these struggles. The group of six core members, organized primarily on Facebook, is an official sponsor circle — part of a national program that serves as an alternative to resettlement agencies. Sponsor circles consist of certified communities of people who assist incoming Afghan refugees with finding housing, employment, and preliminary income support.

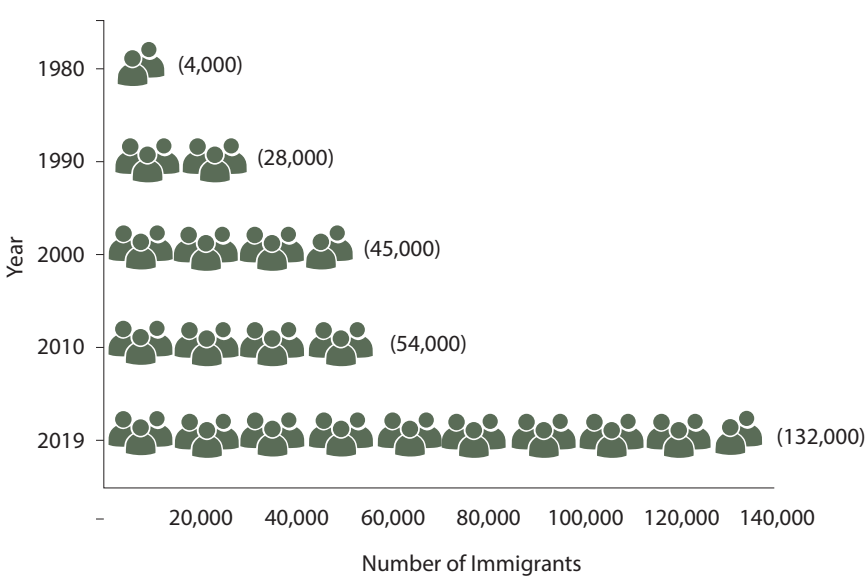
Iowa currently hosts five sponsor circles, according to Erin Howe, Sponsor Circles Program Director of nonprofit REACT DC. To establish a circle, a group must apply and go through a certification process. Then, a family can be moved in.

Iowa City Afghan Allies member Sally Hartman,



Contributed photo of the first Support Circle in Iowa City meeting at the house set for an Afghan family. From left to right: Carol Tyx, Tom McMurray, Mary McMurray, Eric Jones, and Sally Hartman. Andy Douglas is taking the photo.

Afghan Immigrant Population in the United States, 1980-2019



who has a long history of working with immigrant families, said one of her friends introduced the idea of sponsor circles. The certification process to create a sponsor circle can

Iowa City Afghan Allies has reached its goal of 60 percent of the total funding needed to adequately house a family of six for three months — \$2,275 per settler — and is now

a month ago and we're still waiting."

The group's application was submitted in February.

Two churches, the Unitarian Universalist

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— Carol Tyx, Afghan Allies member

be long — communities of five or more people must form a circle, then complete a background check, fundraise, and officially apply.

awaiting an interested family to choose them.

"That's the case with a lot of sponsor circles," Hartman said. "We were ready almost

Society and Faith United Church of Christ, have offered discounted rental housing within a parsonage for when the family arrives.

"We're not sure if we have a long wait in front of us, or if it'll happen tomorrow, we just don't know. But the families do choose based on the application," Hartman said.

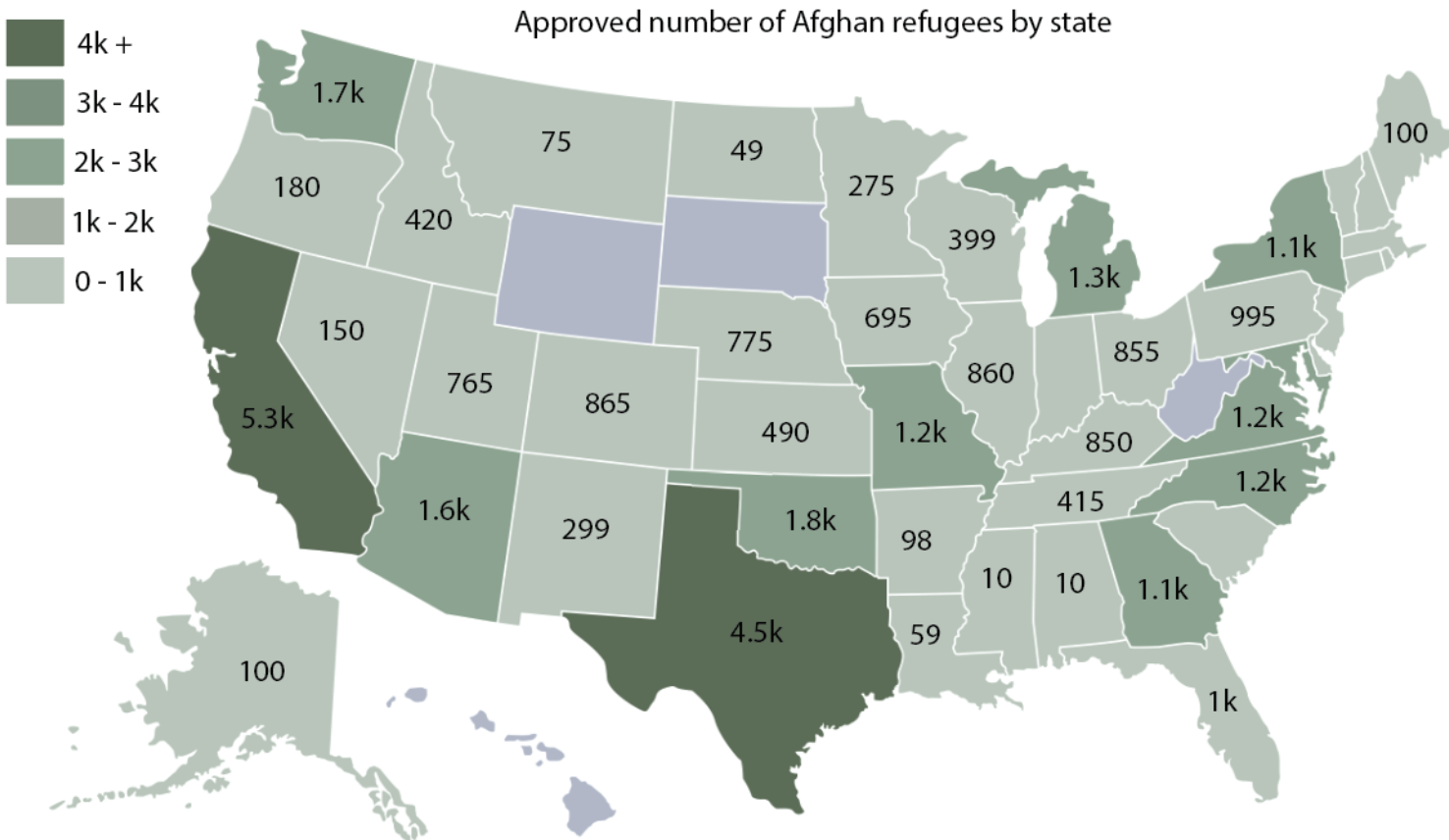
Afghan Allies member Carol Tyx said when she was asked to be a part of the organization, she was eager to see what use she could be.

She said she enjoys the idea of sponsor circles because they are less concentrated. In the past, Afghan refugees have been moved into inadequate conditions. Most recently, a family of 14 lived in an extended-stay Urbandale hotel arranged by a resettlement agency, with little government support or access to food and necessities.

"I think the advantage of having a circle, as opposed to an agency, is we get to spread refugees across our state rather than having an enormous concentration in one place," Tyx said.

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Source: Axios | Graphic by Rose Foley



Calendar

Community Events on Campus

Friday, May 5, 12 p.m.: Squeaky Clean: Bar Soap Making with the Inclusion Agents (Seamans Center)

Wednesday, May 11, 5 p.m. : CIAE Graduation: A Celebration of Inclusive Academic Excellence (Iowa Memorial Union)

Monday, May 9, 12:30 p.m.: Discover Study Abroad (Virtual)

Thursday, May 12, 3 p.m. : International Student Graduation (Old Capitol Museum, Senate Chamber)

Stay tuned for more Amplify sections and community chats.