

# Love Changing Lives.

Spring 2022 Newsletter



Your gift in action.

## Afghan family escapes for new life in Tulsa

When Fazl and Aria first arrived in Tulsa with their 25-day old baby, Arshia, who was born on an American military base, they knew no one and had no home. Despite these challenges, the couple had been determined to get out of Afghanistan, where the Taliban threatened their safety along with so many others.

Fazl and Aria are an exceptional couple; both are educated with college degrees and speak excellent English. Their level of education is not common in Afghanistan, but allowed Fazl to support his family along with his mother and sister. Fazl and his brother worked for over six years at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. The promise of a green card meant that eventually, Fazl and Aria would be able to move to the United States. But, as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated last August and the American government left, Fazl and his family were forced to find their own way out. Thankfully, they made it onto an overcrowded military plane to leave Kabul.

*"We feel that this is our home, because the most important thing is people around us who are so nice. Especially Catholic Charities, who has helped us in resettlement and everything. We really appreciate that."*

- Fazl

Because of Fazl's involvement with the U.S. government, the small family became an instant target. Not long after the family left, the Taliban broke into the home of Fazl's mother and sister, demanding to know if the family was there. Luckily, after searching the home and finding nothing, the Taliban left leaving only shattered glass behind.

While Fazl is still able to contact his family via phone, communication is shaky due to constant power outages.

*Continued inside...*





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Fazl enjoys working for First Oklahoma Bank, has recently gotten his driver's license, and even purchased a car with the help of a loan from his employer. Aria plans to continue her studies and hopes to work from home while caring for Arshia. Both are ambitious and have gotten off to a great start in their new home. Fazl says, "Now we just want to help other Afghan families who do not speak English."

## A community effort...

Settling 800 refugees in Tulsa has been a huge community effort. Many hands are needed to make sure the refugees are cared for well: from the initial airport pickup to moving the families from temporary housing into their own apartments and homes. That's where volunteers like Felix Cuellar and Susan Edwards come in.

Felix and Susan are long-time volunteers at Catholic Charities. Pre-pandemic, they spent their time working in the kitchen and distributing food. Additionally, Susan taught classes at Madonna House. Throughout COVID, Felix and Susan also

volunteered in the food pantry and, in September, transitioned to helping the Afghan refugee program.

Felix and Susan saw a need for additional transportation beyond airport pickups and readily jumped in. They began driving people to doctors' appointments, cultural orientation classes, and other places they needed to go. **Throughout their time driving, Felix and Susan have developed friendships with several of the Afghan families and have worked to advocate for their needs. They hope to continue supporting them as they adjust to life in the United States.**

Fazl, Aria, Susan, and Felix come from vastly different backgrounds, but all call Tulsa home. Thanks to the efforts of so many volunteers and community partners, our new Afghan neighbors continue to be welcomed with love.

## Services provided to refugees by Catholic Charities and our partner organizations:

- Airport welcome and transportation to temporary housing
- Translation services
- Temporary and then long-term housing arrangements
- Transportation to appointments
- Hot meals while in temporary housing
- Clothing
- Furnishing apartments with all necessities
- Case management
- Assistance with job search
- Assistance with asylum status
- School enrollment
- Cultural orientation classes
- English classes
- Assistance with other programs

**700**  
volunteers  
have given



**12,000**  
hours for the  
Afghan refugees





## Back in person, Cooking Up Compassion 2022 was a record-breaking success!

Catholic Charities held its 16th annual Cooking Up Compassion gala on February 26th, hosted by event chairs Mandy and Blake Atkins.

*"Planning is already underway for next year, but for now, please everyone take a moment to give thanks for all of the blessings bestowed on the event this year in both monetary and human terms." - Blake Atkins.*



We can't wait to see you next year!  
Save the date!

2.26.23



## Culinary training program will bring many gifts to those it serves.



Catholic Charities will soon add a brand-new program to campus: the culinary training program. Headed by Chef Michael Fusco, the program will train people in essential skills for food service as assistant chefs, waiters, and line cooks with upward career mobility. Food services throughout Tulsa are facing staffing issues. "We've all seen the signs," Chef Michael says, "Going into restaurants and the dining room is closed, help wanted signs, to-go food only, not enough staff..."

The culinary training program will operate out of the new commercial kitchen, and trainees will prepare ready-made meals for clients who are shopping in The Market. We are so excited to serve our community in this new way!

*The first year of this new program was funded by the generosity of our guests at Cooking Up Compassion and a matching gift of \$150,000!*

Donations from individuals like you fuel our mission to be Christ's merciful love to those who suffer.

Many are surprised to learn that Catholic Charities does not receive funds from the Diocese of Tulsa's Faith & Works Annual Appeal.

You may donate using the enclosed envelope or by going to our website:

[cceok.org/donate](http://cceok.org/donate)



*Hope* is an everlasting legacy.

Including Catholic Charities in your estate planning can be the open door to a better future for the most vulnerable in our community.

Planned giving can benefit your family, and at the same time the organizations you support.

**Learn more about our complimentary planned giving services.**

**We invite you to call (918) 508-7116**

Eastern Oklahoma  
**CATHOLIC**  
**CHARITIES**

*Wishing you a blessed and Happy Easter!*

I have come into the world as *light*, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness.

JOHN 12:46