

Project P-789
Final Report
July 2, 2015

The Magic Valley Refugee Day was held on June 19, 2015 at the College of Southern Idaho. The college provides services to refugees coming to the area through the College of Southern Idaho Refugee Service Center. The college provides programs that assist refugees coming to the area by providing educational programs such as English as a second language classes. They also assist in helping refugees to find housing and employment.

Recently there has been some dissention in the community about the origin and number of refugees coming into the area. In the past several years over 5,000 refugees have come into our community which is less than 100,000.

The Refugee Service Center has put on an event called the Magic Valley Refugee day. This event provides an opportunity for the refugees to share their culture, food, song and native culture with their new community. The Rotary Club of Twin Falls has been attempting to go beyond the traditional projects we have done in the past and this year proposed to sponsor the event in the hopes of developing better understanding between the new members of our community and the existing community.

The event drew a total of 500 members from the community to come and gain a better understanding of the newest community members. The refugees had 19 different booths where they displayed different food items including: native foods, clothing and craft items. There were several of the different groups that performed different cultural activities such as singing and dancing.

Refugees represented the following countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Burunda, Belgium Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Nepal, and Sudan. There was really good interaction between the refugees and the community members in attendance. Since the event there have been several letters to the editor in the local paper that have pointed out that the event changed the opinions of many local people regarding the bringing refugees into the community and how we are a richer community for what they have and will contribute to the community.

There were eight Rotarians from our club who were able to man a booth about Rotary and they provided Rotary handout materials for those attending. We had our inflatable Rotary Logo at the booth to draw attention to our role in the event.

The contributions from our club and the District Grant did not cover all of the expenses but we covered most of the food costs as well as the refuse service for the event. The total amount expended on the event by the Twin Falls Rotary Club was \$2230.32. The source of the funds was \$1480.32 from club funds and \$750 from the District Designated Grant. The event was a success and plans have already begun for next year's event.