

AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCH REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT DRIVING PROGRAM

HISTORY and BACKGROUND

Augustana Lutheran Church has been helping refugees and immigrants in WNY for more than 20 years. In 2007, Augustana instituted the Refugee and Immigrant Driving Program to help individuals earn their driver's licenses. It is the only program of its kind in Western New York. Referrals are received from former participants and from Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Service, Journey's End, and the International Institute.

HOW THE DRIVING PROGRAM WORKS

First step: Volunteers meet at the church to assemble classroom training materials. Group instruction is then provided at the church by additional volunteers. Instruction is centered around topics that help the students prepare for the permit test.

Next steps: When individuals are ready to take the permit test, volunteers meet them at a local Department of Motor Vehicles office and help them complete the paperwork. If students pass the permit test, they are reimbursed for the permit fee. Depending on the amount of available funds, as many individuals as possible are enrolled in professional driving lessons, culminating in the students taking their road test.

Final step: Celebrate! Augustana invites the participants to an annual luncheon at the church to honor their achievements.

OUTCOMES

Augustana volunteers have aided more than 90 participants from 20 different countries in obtaining driver's licenses. Additional participants have earned their driving permit.

By earning their driver's license, refugees and immigrants are able to gain increased access to employment opportunities and healthcare, as well as expanded ability to choose neighborhoods and schools, and participate in community activities.

COSTS

Costs, from training materials to the permit test fee and professional driving lessons, are paid for by donations, Lutheran Charities, the Lutheran Foundation of WNY, and Thrivent Financial. It costs about \$500 to send one person to driving school. 100% of donations go to the cost of materials and driving lessons. There are no staff or overhead costs.

Augustana is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization. Donations can be made payable and sent to:

Augustana Lutheran Church 3143 Eggert Road Tonawanda, NY 14150

Read more about Augustana at www.augustanaonline.org .

For more information, contact the church office at (716) 832-5720 /augustchurch@yahoo.com

Please consider how you can help this program continue to help others. Thank you!