

# Starting New Again: *InterFaith Works*

Individuals from all over the globe occupy the main lobby of InterFaith Works (InterFaith). The beautiful blend of their languages are intertwined, a sign that afternoon classes are about to get underway.

"It's a very dignified environment," InterFaith President and CEO Beth Broadway said. "People come into our building and say, 'wow' because it is a very lovely space."

Not so long ago, InterFaith's offices were spread across Syracuse. Broadway remembers how it used to be prior to October 2014: Its refugee operation set up shop on the Northside while the rest of its operations, programs and administrative offices were located on the Eastside.

The organization's home is now in one building on James Street, where the entire staff functions together under one roof. With the help of a Community Foundation grant, InterFaith was able to complete renovations and move into the space.

InterFaith addresses the needs of those who have arrived through federal refugee resettlement programs — fleeing war, political oppression and famine. The organization also assists the needs of the elderly, those in prisons, hospitals and nursing homes, and addresses hunger and housing.

Broadway explained that in order for InterFaith to lay down its roots, its new location had to meet the needs of the populations it serves. Most specifically, it was important to be located close enough for refugees to walk, as many don't initially have cars.

Since moving in, InterFaith has not only grown, but has been able to advance its services, by offering more classes for its refugee population. Shou Da Yan, a refugee from China, is

one of the many success stories that has come out of the refugee program. He arrived in the United States in February 2017.

When he was younger, Shou Da's mother and father were both imprisoned in Shenyang under religious persecution. During that time, he lived with his cousin and found it extremely hard to live with a very limited income. His mother lives here now, and he hopes to bring his father to the United States and make his family whole again. He credits InterFaith with helping him learn English and obtain his first job.

Shou Da is just one of many refugees seeking a better life in America. The road to get here is grueling and tiresome. InterFaith is instrumental in getting newly resettled people acclimated and helping them become self-sufficient. Staff assists with the details many take for granted — like completing paperwork, getting connected to a primary care physician and ensuring their homes are secure.

Broadway says that the refugees who come through their doors are some of the most resilient, hardworking people she has ever met.

"They are survivors and will do just about anything to start their lives over again," Broadway said.

Creating this facility has been transformative for InterFaith Works. "The building has really been a tool — a vehicle — to accomplish our mission," Broadway said. "And our mission is to build a community where all people are treated with respect and dignity. We get to say, 'We're all here. We're all in this together and it makes us stronger. It's what builds our democracy.'"



*Shou Da Yan, a refugee from China, sits in the new headquarters of InterFaith Works in Syracuse.*