KOP

Keeping Our Promise Inc.

2024 Annual Report



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KOP
Keeping Our Promise Inc.

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Keeping Our Promise Inc.

Organization Overview



Mission

To provide comprehensive resettlement assistance to endangered wartime allies who served U.S. interests in conflict and war zones.

Our Commitment



In collaboration with volunteers and community partners we provide:

- Housing with full furnishings
- Warm welcoming at arrival
- Job and language pathways
- Transportation assistance
- Culturally aware case management
- Connections to community programs and more!

Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on 2024, I am filled with deep gratitude and awe for what this community has made possible. This was a year defined by urgency, compassion, and extraordinary partnership—and together, we rose to meet the moment.

In 2024, Keeping Our Promise helped to resettle a record number of Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) families— 94 families in total. We directly resettled 43 families through the federal government's new "virtual placement" program and worked in partnership with Catholic Family Services, World Relief, and Church World Services to help an additional 51 families.

The stakes were often life and death. When Afghan SIV families faced imminent deportation from Pakistan back to Afghanistan due to expiring visas, Keeping Our Promise acted swiftly—arranging 31 life-saving flights that brought families to safety just in time.

Housing remained one of our greatest challenges and commitments. This year, we arranged housing for 77 families, covering first month's rent and security deposits, and bridging the gap between rising rents and limited DSS benefits so families could stabilize and begin rebuilding their lives.

Equally important was supporting families as they began to build daily routines and independence. In partnership with A Horse's Friend, we offered a summer camp experience for SIV children—many of whom had experienced significant trauma—providing them with joy, connection, and healing through time outdoors and with animals.

Through our partnership with R-Community Bikes, children and adults received free bicycles, offering both independence and a sense of normalcy. We also continued our driver education and licensing program, helping Afghan men and women earn their New York State driver's licenses—an essential step toward employment, education, and long-term stability.

None of this work happens without people. We were proud to see Board Member Mirwais Nazuri and longtime volunteer Judy Weiner recognized on World Refugee Day for their dedication to the Afghan community—honors that reflect the spirit of so many who quietly serve every day.

We were also honored to welcome Dr. Nadia Hashimi as the special guest at our annual Gala. Her presence, and her powerful storytelling rooted in the people and history of Afghanistan, reminded us why this work matters—not only in numbers, but in human dignity, memory, and hope.

To our donors, volunteers, partners, board members, and the Afghan families who continue to place their trust in us: thank you. In a year marked by uncertainty and shifting policies, you stood firm in your commitment to keeping our promise. Because of you, families are safe, children are laughing and learning, and futures are being rebuilt—one home, one flight, one act of kindness at a time.

With deepest appreciation,



Ellen Smith

Executive Director & Founder
Keeping Our Promise, Inc.

Staff & Board Members



Ellen Smith
Executive Director
Founder



Abdul Rahim Rahim
Operations Manager
Arrivals Coordination



Kristen Makineci
Grant Manager
Arrivals Coordination



Chandee Searcy
Community Engagement,
Administrative Assistant



Bellal Ahmadzai
Operations Manager



Shaista Shaheed
Case Manager



Sarah Willoughby
Social Work Intern



Shabana Amiri
Human Services Intern

Staff & Board Members

Interim Board Chair:
Andrae Evans

Treasurer:
Amanda Gangly

Secretary:
Jill Baszczynski

Abdullah Dindost
Michel Durfee
Zainab Hussaini
Mirwais Nazuri
Thomas Rusling
Jawaid Samadey
Nicholas Stefanovic



Board Member Nicholas Stefanovic is inducted into the NYS Senate Vetrans Hall of Fame, May 2024

Volunteers & Community Partners

In 2024, Keeping Our Promise strengthened our network of volunteers and community partners to support wartime ally families arriving in Rochester. Through collaborations with organizations like Jewish Family Services and Impact Earth, KOP provided school supplies for Afghan children, helping them join their new classrooms with confidence. Partnerships with Nazareth University volunteers enabled free lead testing during World Refugee Day, while True North Church hosted a dental care pre-registration workshop for newly resettled adults in preparation for a partnership with Eastman Dental's SmileMobile. KOP also worked with St. John Fisher University's Wegmans School of Pharmacy and Irondequoit Presbyterian Church to provide household items for incoming families, ensuring that every home was fully equipped for a fresh start.

Community partners also helped KOP deliver meaningful cultural and celebratory experiences. The Genesee Country Village & Museum hosted an Independence Day event and naturalization ceremony for over 70 Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) families, with support from Monroe County and local businesses. Generous donors and foundations, including the Shapiro Foundation, Enterprise Mobility Foundation, and Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, contributed over $60,000 in grants and pledges, enabling KOP to expand housing, transportation, and resource programs. These combined efforts demonstrate the power of volunteerism and partnership in creating a welcoming, supportive, and thriving environment for those resettling to Rochester.





Volunteers & Community Partners



We thank all those who support our mission, and welcome our wartime allies to Rochester!





205 registered volunteers





3,391 cumulative hours recorded

Volunteers & Community Partners





A Horse's Friend
Asbury First United Methodist Church
Avocado Green Brands LLC
Bethany Presbyterian Church
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Catholic Charities Family & Community Services
Community Christian Church
Eastman Institute of Oral Health- SMILEmobiles
Economy Self Store Inc
First Presbyterian Church of Honeoye Falls
First Presbyterian Society of Pittsford
Genesee Country Village & Museum
Greater Rochester Health Foundation
Impact Earth
InterVol
Ionia United Methodist Church
Irondequoit Presbyterian Church
rondequoit Rotary Club
John Calvin Presbyterian Church

Volunteers & Community Partners

Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church
Miles4Migrants
Mountain Rise United Church of Christ
Neighbors for Refugees Inc.
R Community Bikes
Rochester Greenovation
Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services
Sew Green Rochester
Spiritus Christie Church
St. John's University College of Pharmacy
Sunnking Sustainable Solutions
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
The Junior League of Rochester, Diaper Bank
The Pirate Toy Fund
Tmobile
True North Church
Union Congregational United Church of Christ
Webster Presbyterian Church
Welcome.US
World Relief





Grants & Programs

Grocery Gift Cards

$2,500
Perpetual Kindness Foundation

Housing Assistance

$5,000
Excellus Health

Hygiene Supplies

$2,000
NextGen Rochester Legacy Fund

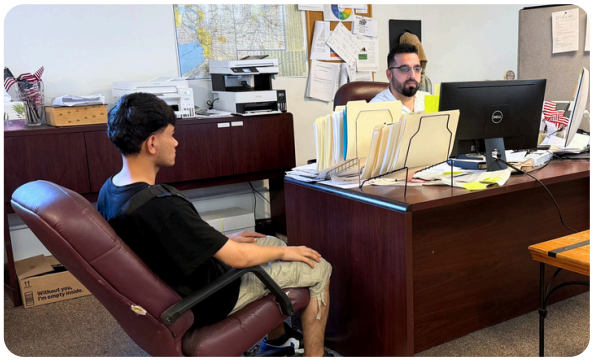
Staff Salaries

$125,000
Mother Cabrini Health Foundation

Staff Salaries

$75,986
Asian American Federation

Grants & Programs



Case Management

Staff provide one year of case management support to each arriving family. These services include ensuring that families are appropriately signed up for appropriate social services, referrals to commmunity programming, and more. **This support is made possible by The Mother Cabrini Foundation.**



Afghan Health Care Initiative

Grant funding from Greater Rochester Health Foundation allowed us to update our website to include important information about local health care resources and healthcare topics relevant to our wartime allies and their families (in English, Dari, and Pashto).

KOP held quarterly events for the local Afghan community to increase health care knowledge and promote social connections.



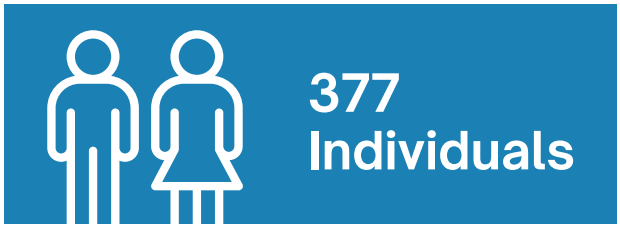
Wellness Workshops

Wellness workshops are underway thanks to **NYS Department of Health.** These workshops focus on topics including: dental care, women's health, healthcare financial assistance, preventative care: vaccines and COVID literacy, etc.

Financials

2024 Resettlement Success





Where Your Contribution Goes

- Security deposit and rent for a house or apartment. KOP covers the difference between rent total and the social service benefits families receive upon arrival. If the head of household enters into Monroe County approved skilled trades program, KOP will continue to pay the difference to help the head of household get through training.
- Fully furnished home including: hygiene and household supplies, linens, and furniture.
- Grocery store and halal market gift cards for food until SNAP is approved. KOP also stocks cupboards/pantries/fridges so the family has food and a hot meal upon arrival.
- RTS bus passes.
- Utility bills on an as-needed basis until the family is employed.
- Laptop or chromebook for job seeking, English language acquisition, etc.

Financials

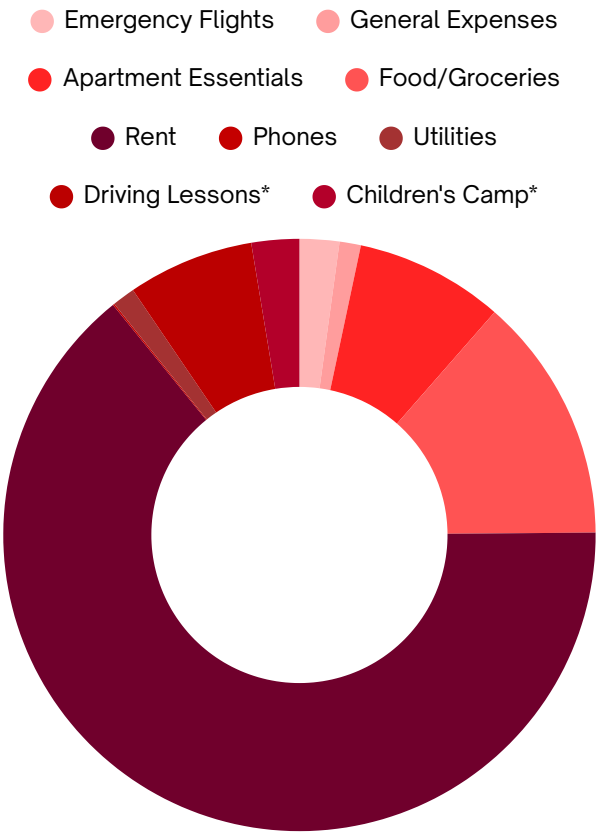
Program Expense Summary

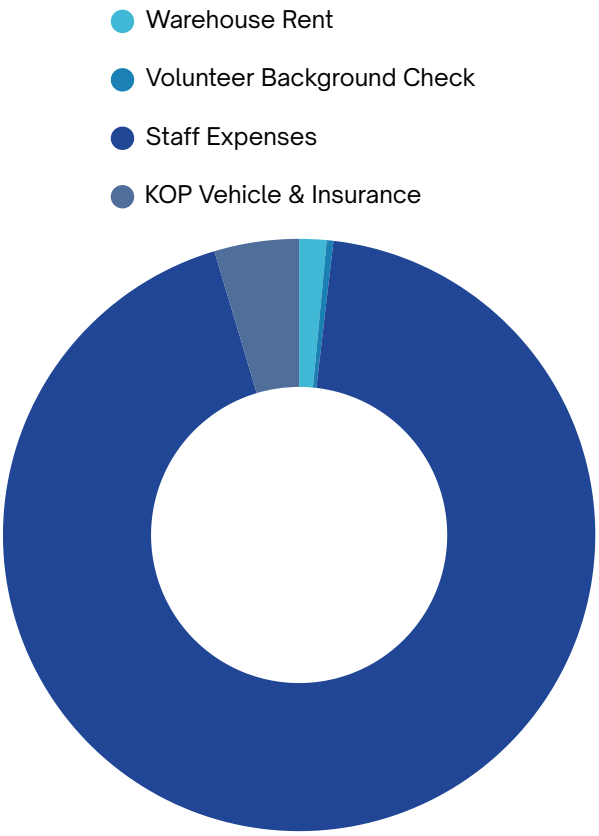
SIV EXPENSES

Apartment Essentials:	$32,976.00
Food/Groceries:	$54,530.
Rent:	$261,186.64
Phones:*	$3,54.78
Utilities:	$5,072.17
General Expenses:	$4,727.77
Driving Lessons:*	$28,020
Children's Camp:*	$10,590
Emergency Flights:	$8,810

OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

Volunteer Background Checks:	$1042
Warehouse Rent:	$4,200
Staff Expenses:	$264,308
KOP Vehicle & Insurance:	$13,055





SIV Stories



Frohar

When baby Omar's mother, Frohar, fled Afghanistan after supporting the United States for two years, she and her husband became stranded on the island of Cyprus following the August 2021 evacuation. While awaiting visa approval, Omar was born without nationality status, leaving him unable to obtain travel documents. With a deportation order looming and no country willing to accept a stateless infant without an Afghan passport, the family's journey to safety became increasingly urgent.

After weeks of sleepless nights, five cancelled flights, and persistent coordination with the U.S. Embassy, Keeping Our Promise successfully secured the family's path to Rochester.



Graduation Day

In June, we proudly celebrated the graduations of Afghan daughters and wives. This significant milestone was made possible through determination, community support, and access to education. Across the world, however, women and girls in Afghanistan continue to face severe restrictions under Taliban rule, without access to school or the freedom to leave their homes.

These graduates stand as powerful role models for younger Afghan girls in our community, demonstrating what is possible through perseverance and opportunity. Their achievements honor the dreams of those still denied an education and inspire us to continue advocating for equitable futures for all Afghan women and girls.

SIV Stories



Faheem & Jerry

After six years apart, Jerry and Faheem reunited at the KOP office, never certain they would ever see each other again. KOP began working on Faheem's case in 2019, after he and his family fled to Turkey following a violent attack that nearly took his life. Jerry provided critical letters of support for Faheem's SIV application and helped raise funds for the family's medical requirements, giving them hope during an uncertain journey.

Just as their visa process cleared major hurdles, the family survived the devastating earthquake in Turkey. With the support of Congressman Morelle's office, coordination with the U.S. Embassy, donor-funded lodging, and an emergency flight offered by a generous supporter, the family finally found safety in Rochester.



Seyir

Ourl SIV community demonstrated exceptional dedication by traveling late into the night to welcome newly arriving families in Buffalo. Despite an 11:30 PM arrival time that was delayed until 2:00 AM, they ensured a warm reception and safe transportation, returning to Rochester at 3:30 AM.

One of those who welcomed the new family even reported to work just 30 minutes later.

Their commitment reflects the strength and generosity of our SIV community, who continue to lift and support one another through every stage of resettlement.

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Thank You For Your Support!



From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your generosity! With supporters like you, we continue to have success in our mission to resettle our wartime allies.

Thank you for helping us in this life saving work!