



CATHOLIC  
CHARITIES

# WORKS OF CHARITY

*Because of you, newcomers find home.*

WINTER 2026



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Serving neighbors in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Sheboygan, Racine,  
Fond du Lac, Kenosha, Walworth, Dodge, Washington & Ozaukee Counties



# Finding Home: Walking with Milwaukee's Rohingya Community

For more than a century, Catholic Charities has helped newcomers find safety, stability and belonging, living out our shared call to *welcome the stranger*. Your support allows us to listen deeply, respond compassionately and remain present as refugee families navigate life in a new country long after formal systems step away.

Through these trusted relationships and in partnership with refugee community leaders, we walk alongside our new neighbors as they rebuild their lives and find home in Milwaukee.

One such relationship is with Milwaukee's Rohingya community.



## A Vibrant Community, New Challenges

The Rohingya people come to the United States after facing generations of persecution and displacement from their home country, Myanmar (formerly Burma).



Many arrive having had no formal education and with languages that were never written down. At the same time, they bring strong family bonds, deep faith and a culture rooted in generosity and gratitude.

In recent years, many Rohingya families have made their way to Milwaukee often migrating from other parts of the U.S., drawn by strong community networks and the opportunity to live among others who share their language and culture. Today, Milwaukee is believed to be home to the largest Rohingya population in the nation, with Rohingya-owned restaurants, grocery stores and mosques contributing to a vibrant and growing community.

“It is a very active, welcoming community here in Milwaukee,” says Claire Reuning, Director of Refugee Integration Services at Catholic Charities. “People want to participate, contribute and build a life. But systems here are very different and navigating them can be overwhelming without support.”

Hasnah Hussin, Refugee Community Engagement Specialist, adds, “People need community support. Many Rohingya families are working hard to adjust while also worrying about preserving their identity, their language, faith and culture as they learn how to live in a completely new world.”

## Listening First, Then Responding

At the heart of Catholic Charities refugee integration work is listening.

“When we asked the Rohingya community what they needed most, the answer was clear,” Claire shares. “Education — especially learning English, understanding systems and preparing for citizenship along with case management that understands their lived experience.”

Because Refugee Integration Services is supported largely by our donors, Catholic Charities can respond creatively and compassionately to those needs.



Services range from refugee-specific case management and cultural education to assistance with work authorization, green cards and citizenship.

“When a Rohingya client becomes a U.S. citizen,” Claire says, “it is often the first time they have ever had citizenship anywhere in the world. There is an incredible sense of belonging — of finally being safe.”

To reach more people and share information in accessible ways, Catholic Charities has also created more than 500 educational videos in multiple languages, helping refugee families learn how to navigate everyday life in southeastern Wisconsin.

## Learning Together

For many Rohingya adults, education is both new and transformative. “Most Rohingya were never allowed to attend school,” Hasnah explains. “They are learning how to learn and building confidence while discovering new skills.”

In-home education has been especially impactful. Through one-on-one tutoring, volunteers meet clients where they are, helping them practice English, prepare for citizenship, and build cultural understanding at a pace that feels safe and encouraging.

Education is particularly important for women, many of whom face cultural barriers to attending classes outside the home. In response, Catholic Charities hosts a weekly virtual Rohingya women’s group.

“We work on phonics, conversation practice and citizenship questions,” says Claire, who facilitates the sessions.

“But just as important, we check in on one another. More than 100 women are part of this group. It’s a safe space where questions can be asked, concerns addressed, and rumors clarified which helps reduce anxiety and supports mental health.”

## Trust That Changes Lives

Today, more than 70 volunteers work alongside 130 refugee adults through Catholic Charities Refugee Integration Services. These relationships often grow into something deeper built on trust, respect and genuine care.

That trust can make all the difference during moments of crisis.

When a single Rohingya mother came to Catholic Charities after devastating flooding last August, she was overwhelmed. With children to care for and no work experience, she didn’t know where to turn.

“She had lost so much and didn’t know what to do,” Hasnah recalls. “She was so grateful just to have someone listen.”

Catholic Charities helped her with gift cards for immediate recovery needs and supported her through renewing paperwork and applying for work. Today, she is employed and is working toward earning her driver’s license.

“She knew where she wanted to be,” Claire says. “She just didn’t know how to get there. Hasnah helped her gain stability and confidence step by step.”





## A Community Rooted in Generosity

Despite the challenges they face, generosity is a defining thread within the Rohingya community.

“It is a community full of love, gratitude, and resilience,” Claire and Hasnah share. “Our clients care deeply about Catholic Charities staff and volunteers — they bring food, they check in, they give thanks.”

Because of deep trust and long-standing relationships, Rohingya families know that Catholic Charities will continue to walk alongside them — listening, responding, and offering support as they build new lives in Milwaukee.



## Walking Together

Because of your generosity, Rohingya families in Milwaukee know they are not alone.

That same spirit of compassion and generosity lives on through volunteers who share their time and presence. With a growing waiting list of adults seeking one-on-one tutoring, Catholic Charities welcomes volunteers to help individuals practice English, prepare for citizenship and build confidence. Opportunities are available both in-person and virtually.

As one volunteer shared, “These sessions are probably the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done. Being part of another person’s journey is deeply meaningful.”

To learn more about volunteering with Catholic Charities, contact Emily Tayler at [volunteer@ccmke.org](mailto:volunteer@ccmke.org).



## Benefit for Hope

An Evening with Catholic Charities

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Italian Community Center – 631 E Chicago St, Milwaukee, WI 53202



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