

# COMMUNITY IMPACT:

## Crisis Food for Fort Wayne-Allen County Burmese Refugees



### Dates of Program

2017- Ongoing

### Field of Work

Pilot program between the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and four community partners to provide emergency food resources to Burmese families in crisis. To be handed out on a case by case basis at the Fort Wayne-Allen County Department of Health, Amani Family Services Inc., and Catholic Charities Fort Wayne-South Bend.

### Problem Synopsis

Burmese clients, unaccustomed to American style food, lacked access to food resources. Health and social service providers needed easy access to emergency rations for their clients suffering from medical misfortune or another crisis.



## Synopsis of Work

The Foundation provided a grant of \$1,500 to the Fort Wayne/Allen County Department of Health so they could have an of an emergency supply of Burmese food items to give to Burmese clients who are in crisis. Together, with community partners, Catholic Charities, and the Associated Churches of Allen County they put the plan into action. Nyein Chan, Catholic Charities Resettlement Director, shopped for the first bag to give Associated Churches food examples to follow. Volunteers then took the plan from there, creating the specialized food bags. The bags contain over a dozen items varying from rice to fish porridge.

Dr. Deborah McMahan, Fort Wayne-Allen County Health Commissioner, recalled one Burmese family who had been dependent on one family member's paycheck before the food bag program. They had already been living paycheck to paycheck when the husband was told he could not work until he passed a TB test. With help from Roger Reece, Pastor of Associated Churches of Fort Wayne & Allen County, the Allen County DOH was able to give them a few bags of food. McMahan said it is not uncommon for newly arrived refugees to have few resources. Having a bag of food with familiar items to eat helps smooth their transition of the first day or two before they can get to a grocery store that carries food with which they are familiar. With the new program in place, there will be food on hand to respond to those in need during a crisis.

## Primary Partners

- Amani Family Services, Inc.
- Associated Churches of Fort Wayne & Allen County
- Catholic Charities of Fort Wayne – South Bend
- The Fort Wayne-Allen County Department of Health
- St. Joseph Community Health Foundation

## Key Results

- Funded 150 emergency rations of food to Burmese clients
- Worked in collaboration with four of the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation's key partners to continue an ongoing support in the refugee community.

## Mission

Since 1998 the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation has been responding to the needs of the at-risk and vulnerable populations in Fort Wayne and Allen County. By responding to situations like the emergency food supplies, St. Joseph Community Health Foundation continues to follow the path of our sponsor, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, who came to Allen County in 1868.