



THE CENTER

201 Bleecker Street | Utica, New York 13501 | 315.738.1083 | TheCenterUtica.org

Our Story

Many Cultures, One Community.

For over 200 years, Utica, New York has attracted immigrants and refugees. In response to the War in Vietnam and the 1980 Refugee Act, the community came together to help those in need by starting the Mohawk Valley Resource Center For Refugees (MVRCR). Since that time, our organization, now known as The Center, has settled more than 16,500 individuals from 36 countries, helping them achieve independence and fully participate in the greater community.

By offering a broad array of integration services, from interpretation and translation to workforce training and development, The Center has truly become the area's economic engine. Creating jobs, facilitating an understanding of all cultures, and helping people rebuild their lives, we remain fully committed to cultivating a thriving, vibrant and inclusive multicultural community.

Our Philosophy

We believe that all people should feel welcome in the City of Utica and throughout the Mohawk Valley. Not only is it a unique part of our heritage, but it's a vital component of our success as a community. To that end, we've created the Welcome Center—a state-of-the-art community space and training center for newcomers and long-time residents alike to meet, work, train, and connect. From private work stations to office spaces equipped with computers and more, the Welcome Center makes opportunities accessible for all.



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Timeline

1979

The Founding: Assisting the Vietnamese

Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRRCR) was officially established with the help of our first executive director, Roberta Douglas, her husband, a group of local clergy, the Superintendent of Utica Schools, the Oneida County Executive, and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. This was in response to the war in Vietnam and the formal establishment of a federal program with the 1980 Refugee Act.

1980s

Welcoming Amerasians, Southeast Asians & Individuals from the Former Soviet Union

MVRRCR grew and prospered with refugee numbers increasing as the Mohawk Valley welcomed individuals from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Poland. The third large wave of refugees began in 1988 with the arrival of the first families from the former Soviet Union.

1990s

Bosnian Refugee Resettlement Reaches Record Numbers

When Bosnian refugees were included in the U.S. refugee allotment, MVRRCR relocated 79 Bosnians during the first year of the program and in 1997 alone, resettled 1,145 Bosnians – the largest number of individuals ever resettled in one year. By 2006 when the last Bosnian arrived under refugee status, MVRRCR had assisted just over 4,500 individuals from the former Yugoslavia.

2000s

The Center Becomes Cultural Connection For Utica Community

Immigration, citizenship, interpretation, translation, and cultural competency services were established and offered to not only immigrants and refugees, but to non-native English speaking individuals and other members of the Utica community. Different populations from Burma, Iraq, Nepal, Somalia, and Sudan were resettled.

2010s

Karen and Burmese Refugees become Second Largest Group Resettled

The Karen people and other populations from Burma (Myanmar) started coming to the U.S. in the early 2000s. By 2019, more than 4,000 people from Burma were resettled in Utica by our programs with hundreds more moving to Utica as secondary migrants.

2019

Today – MVRRCR Becomes The Center

MVRRCR rebrands itself as The Center helping over 16,500+ individuals resettle in the Mohawk Valley region. The Center continues to assist refugees, immigrants, and those with limited English language proficiency throughout the integration process and helps them achieve independence by developing services that enable us to build a community with many cultures.