



A New Minnesotan: Samander

In a moment, at 21 years old, Samander's life changed forever. With just two weeks to prepare, he learned that his family was to be evacuated from Afghanistan to the United States. He was lucky – his mother, father and siblings would all be going with him. But his uncle would have to stay behind.

“I had never been outside Afghanistan before,” says Samander. “I worked as a financial manager at a legal office and had been going to university for two years. Then we lost everything.”

At first, his university English classes were not enough to navigate conversational English in the U.S. “After seven months in New Jersey, my English is much better as I speak it all the time now,” states Samander.

The family's NJ case manager told them they would be permanently resettled in Minnesota. “My first thought was ‘Oh it is so cold,’ but it is worth all the opportunities that I see. But like anything, I needed help to guide me on what to do.”

“I had to help support my family, but I wasn't finding any success...”

The first task was to get a job. “I had to help support my family, but I wasn't finding any success in finance or accounting.” At Daily Work, his case manager introduced him to Seagate. “I get to work with computers and use my math,” says Samander. “I'm a manufacturing specialist and excited that Seagate will help



IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

Focusing Our Strengths Toward Some of Our Community's Current Needs

Over the past year, Daily Work has been immersed in listening sessions, data gathering, and self-assessment to determine how our unique nonprofit can best benefit the Twin Cities region we serve. This work fueled a nine-month strategic planning process that began in March 2022 and will culminate in November.

Founded in 2000 by a collaboration of Lutheran congregations to help immigrants and refugees from their churches overcome barriers to employment, Daily Work has always been aware of the value these newcomers bring to our communities, and the additional hurdles to workplace success they face.

Immigrants and Refugees are a Critical Part of Minnesota, Including Our Economy

They make up nearly 10% (and growing) of our workforce, in contrast to the shrinking labor participation rate among an aging population of native-born citizens (MN Chamber of Commerce, 2021). However, this obscures the significant challenges that immigrants face in finding secure, well-paid employment.

Data consistently shows that foreign-born workers are twice as likely to be unemployed as U.S.-born workers (BLS, 2021). Furthermore, refugees are twice as likely as immigrants to be unemployed, even controlling for education, employment history, and age (Jamil et al, 2012). Both immigrants and refugees are also much more likely to be employed in jobs that require fewer credentials and provide less pay than in their home country (Georgetown University, 2020).

Daily Work is Intentionally Centering and Deepening Services for Immigrants

The decision to focus on immigrants came out of our strategic planning process both because of the needs we see in the community, and the opportunity to leverage our strengths to meet these needs. Minnesota is likely to continue to be a leader in welcoming immigrants and refugees, accepting some of the highest numbers in the U.S. (WCCO, 2021). However, once here, people face a complex bureaucracy for securing support – one that often is unable to meet their full needs toward a flourishing life.

We Recognize We Have an Opportunity to Address the Disconnects in Our Community

Daily Work specializes in assisting folks with complex needs and/or facing systemic barriers to employment. Using a person-centered, relationship-based approach, we meet people where they are to help get them where they want to be. We are one of the few employment-service providers focused on serving immigrant communities, and we've established a good reputation in their communities and among other organizations that serve them.

Because of Our Emphasis on Creating Community, We're Uniquely Well-Suited to This Strategic Shift

Daily Work is not providing one-way services; we are striving to build a shared, inclusive community rooted in empathy, learning and exchange, and collective care. Our holistic, relationship-based approach is more effective at serving people who often fall through the cracks in public agency and employment service organizations because they need aid in multiple areas, require ongoing, customized assistance, or benefit from culturally responsive services.

This approach is rapidly collecting evidence for its effectiveness: national studies have found that culturally grounded, strengths-based community support programs improve employment outcomes, reduce social isolation, and boost overall health and well-being for marginalized peoples.

We Also Have the Flexibility to Implement Practices That Many Larger Organizations Cannot

Some service providers cannot deliver personalized approaches due to restrictions based on funding, employability, skill level, program affiliation, and more. Because Daily Work is almost entirely funded by individual gifts and grants from private foundations, it means we can offer unique services and work with job seekers in ways that best suit their needs.

Daily Work is poised to scale and develop our model to both increase impact and chart new ground in how we connect people to meaningful employment, and build community and thriving lives. Your partnership is critical to this effort. Thank you for being here.

From Julie Hoff, Executive Director



ALL ARE WELCOME HERE



From Refugee to Daily Work Case Manager

Expanding Our Services to Support New Afghan Arrivals

Mahdi Sarbaz was a university teacher and worked with various domestic and international media when Afghanistan fell to the Taliban in 2021.

"After entering America, my main concern was finding a job," says Mahdi. He had heard that 9 out of 10 American companies needed employees, but despite his significant credentials and experience, it was not easy for him to find suitable work. Mahdi wanted a position that fit his goals and values in life. "I wanted to focus on being productive, instead of busy."

He learned about Daily Work from a friend, and he reached out to learn more.

"I realized Daily Work was taking notes of my interests and needs to find a suitable job," observes Mahdi. "Daily Work pays attention to all aspects of the immigrant life, including educational opportunities, language training, computers, internet, health care, and answering email. Anything that would help."

On his third appointment, Mahdi received a long list of job opportunities. One of the positions was as a case manager at Daily Work working with Afghan evacuees. To Mahdi, this was suitable work, and we welcomed him to our staff in October.

More Than Twelve Hundred Afghan Evacuees Have Come to Minnesota Over the Past Year

The sheer number and how quickly they arrived created tremendous bottlenecks for services. When Daily Work agreed to join in the State of Minnesota's resettlement efforts by providing employment services the assumption was that evacuees would have strong support for basic needs, housing, and language classes.

Unfortunately, this was not the case. Long wait lists for services were often the norm; some evacuees had never even been contacted directly by other assigned service providers. So Daily Work stepped forward.

Since June Daily Work Has Supported 24 New Afghan Arrivals – More Than Double Our State Contract

To date, nine have started jobs that pay an average of \$20.52 per hour. In addition

to resume, networking, application, and interview services, we've increased efforts to include more resources for paying past-due rent, providing interpreters, obtaining driving lessons, and providing transportation to and from Daily Work appointments and job interviews. Staffing, volunteers, and employer partnerships have also expanded.

Referrals Keep Coming, and Those Who Have Secured Work Continue to Seek Our Partnership

Heading into the final quarter of the year our state contract has ended, but our commitment has not. Daily Work's relationship-based model means we collaboratively strive to advance the life and work prospects for these new Americans and all of our job seekers. We are their network. Their emotional support. Their local guides.

SOME WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Donate to Daily Work. We give job seekers a leg up – no matter who they are or where they are from.

Read further. The Sahan Journal focuses on MN immigrants and communities of color: <https://sahanjournal.com/housing/afghan-refugees-minnesota-housing-help/>

Volunteer at Daily Work. Provide rides to and from our office, job interviews, or medical appointments. Help drivers practice to prepare for the behind-the-wheel driving test. If you have a specific skill – computers? teaching English? other? – we'll put your expertise to good use. Contact Judy Sharken Simon: judy@daily-work.org

DAILY WORK POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

Samander *Continued from page 1*

pay for my education. Once I'm settled I will apply, transfer my university credits, and finish my degree in software engineering.”

Daily Work also helped Samander take behind-the-wheel driving lessons and set him up with a TECI laptop computer – some basic tools and skills needed to navigate his new life. “All of these things have been very helpful, but the networking part, introducing me to Seagate, was the most helpful.”

“When we first came here, it was so difficult to think about the future. Now everything is clear, and I'm happy to see all of my opportunities to support my family and continue my education.”



Sunflower Award Goes to Vern & Birgitta Rice

Vernon and Birgitta radiate warmth and joy in everything they do...and that energy has been instrumental in generating more job seekers, volunteers, and donations to Daily Work for more than a decade.

Volunteer Sohini Basu sat down to chat with 'Vern,' as he is fondly known, to learn about his passion for Daily Work, which he says stems from his career as a Lutheran pastor. Now retired, Vern and his wife Birgitta have been a source of unbridled enthusiasm and inspiration to all of us at Daily Work, many of whom are connected to this organization thanks to their outreach.

For their ambassadorship and commitment to inspiring everyone to do better by each other, we honor Vern and Birgitta Rice as our 2022 Sunflower Award winners.

Birgitta & Vern at the 2019 Picnic in the Park event



Excerpts from the chat:

Sohini: It is such an honor to have this interview with you Vern!

Vern: No problem!

S: I will straight away get to the questions. So, how many years have you and Birgitta been associated with Daily Work?

V: Oh, it has been many years now. I think more than decade!

S: What motivated you to support Daily Work?

V: When somebody gets a job, it opens so many opportunities. Daily Work has been effective in supporting so many job seekers to get on their own feet and have a fulfilling life. And this support has, in turn, encouraged people like us to help others to do better!

S: And how did you get involved?

V: I heard about Daily through the church [Christ the King Lutheran Church in New Brighton] itself.

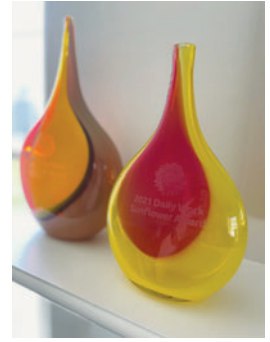
S: What is the one thing you would like to say to Daily Work?

V: My wife Birgitta, and me, we are so happy to support Daily Work. We love working with Julie and all the others there. I would encourage volunteers to continue to support Daily Work, and if you know anyone who could use some help to find a job and have a better life, don't look any further!

About the Award

The **Sunflower Award** recognizes stakeholders whose longevity and loyalty of service have been central to creating a more caring, equitable, and vibrant community, both at Daily Work and in our broader Twin Cities region.

Local artisan John Reichel, from Vandalia Glassworks, created these glowing glass vases for our 2021 awardees.



TECI Continues to Deliver

Dawa Jan with his TECI laptop



TECI (Technology Essentials Core Initiative) launched in spring 2021. Its goal – to put computers and internet service inside the homes of job seekers. A volunteer tech squad delivers the equipment, sets up the system to connect to wifi, and teaches some basic-use skills. Since its inception, 31 people have received laptops, a wireless mouse, and connection to a low-cost internet provider if needed.

To both monitor and address participant needs and evaluate the success of TECI we conduct three-, six-, and twelve-month assessments. One of the primary goals of the program, beyond tech access, is for job seekers to improve their computer skills. At this time, 84 percent of those who have completed at least one assessment report increased computer skills. Total assessment results for year one are expected early in 2023.

In addition to learning how a computer is impacting job seekers' lives, we've identified that many need additional skill development to participate in existing, online computer-training classes. To address this, Daily Work started a monthly, in-person computer-skills group staffed by volunteers on Saturday mornings.

The monthly sessions include tactical support aimed at skill development, and provide the opportunity for additional assistance via Zoom or Google Meet between the Saturday sessions. The goal is to assist job seekers in building foundational skills that will allow them to pursue other learning opportunities that already exist in the nonprofit community.

In the first three sessions, the computer skills group supported seven different job seekers, some multiple times. Our gratitude goes out to volunteers Simon Benarroch and Madhesh Rajasekhar who have been instrumental in getting the program up and running. In addition, Debi Clapsaddle and Colin King provide installation.

Have tech knowledge to share? Contact Judy Sharken Simon: judy@daily-work.org

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What are your end-of-year giving plans?



Contribute to Daily Work on November 17th – or on any day – at GiveMN.org, by using the enclosed envelope, or through our website’s donation portal. Until December 31st, gifts up to \$20,000 will be **matched 2-to-1 to triple your impact!**

www.GiveMN.org/organization/Daily-Work



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