



We are protecting Khushal's identity

Navigating a New Life in Minnesota

Khushal was working in Kandahar alongside U.S. service members the day Kabul fell to Taliban control and the Afghan government dissolved. Fear of retaliation gripped every Afghan who had been working with the United States to establish a modern democracy. Within two weeks, 120,000 Afghans were scattered around the world in one of the largest humanitarian evacuations in history. Operation Allies Welcome resettled 80,000 evacuees into this country. Khushal, whose name has been changed here to maintain confidentiality,

would get a new life in America. His wife, mother, father, and brother would not.

In Minnesota, refugee and resettlement agencies became instantly flooded by the mass influx. Khushal's case got stalled. Stress and uncertainty became a way of life. "The language barrier was very difficult to handle and to be able to navigate life," says Khushal.

Khushal found the extra support he needed to acclimate to American life with Daily Work. "Early on, we discovered that Khushal had not been assigned to an immigration agency," recalled Case Worker Vince DiGiorno. "That could have been a huge problem for him, resulting in loss of benefits or even work authorization." DW connected him to the Advocates for Human Rights and Khushal is now in the process of getting his Green Card.

"It is very difficult to get around in this country without a driver's license and a car."

Once Khushal found a job, Daily Work assisted him with a MicroGrant which paid for driving lessons. "It is very difficult to get around in this country without a driver's license and a car," observes Khushal.



Research Shows Daily Work is Transformational to Stakeholders

From Executive Director Julie Hoff

At its essence, Daily Work's mission transcends merely landing a job. It's about guiding individuals on their

journey to discover fulfilling work, empowering them to carve out their own destinies. We aim not just to help people find any job, but to assist them in securing positions that resonate with their individual strengths and aspirations. This might sound straightforward, but when achieved, it's a transformative experience, far surpassing a mere change of employment.

During our latest strategic deliberations, we aimed to elucidate the unique essence of Daily Work, that "secret sauce." We all sensed its distinctiveness but struggled to pinpoint it. Hence, we delved into the question: "What profound changes do our stakeholders undergo, and how can we amplify these transformations?"

Two determined PhD students from the University of Minnesota's Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development adopted a scientific lens to this quest. They undertook a comprehensive literature review and in-depth interviews to unearth what sets DW apart, crafting strategies to consistently offer transformational experiences to every job seeker, intern, and volunteer.

Their findings revealed that job seekers experienced notable enhancements in mental well-being, self-confidence, the urge to contribute, societal integration, and career growth. The researchers noted:

- *Job seekers described how Daily Work was hands-on initially, helping them connect to external resources and complete necessary tasks. As time progresses, DW helps job seekers take over their own tasks/responsibilities, encouraging independence, accountability, and self-sufficiency.*
- *Daily Work has a "strengths-based" approach that empowers job seekers to demand more out of their job expectations. This approach allows for job seekers to believe in themselves and recognize their strengths – and get past the notion they should "settle" for an average job.*

Interns in Social Work underwent transformative shifts in their cultural comprehension, professional evolution, and personal growth. Volunteers, too, gained deeper cultural insights, renewed dedication to altruism, and began prioritizing human connections over mere technical skills.

Both volunteers and interns emphasized the profound personal significance of their experiences, noting how it imbued their daily lives with more purpose, and local and global knowledge. As one remarked:

“Listening to the stories of job seekers, they tell you obstacles to getting a job that I hadn’t thought of before. I felt like it helped me keep up with what’s going on in the world.”

Key takeaways in the findings include the significance of cultivating relationships, perhaps through events that bring job seekers together. Outside research indicates that fostering connections can bolster the mental and physical health of immigrants.

Job seekers also highlighted the importance of having more permanent staff and dedicated long-term volunteers for seamless support. The relationship-focused approach of DW stood out as a pivotal aspect of their transformative journey.

This research underscores the importance of our flexible, person-centric approach that prioritizes individual needs over efficiency or budget constraints. While landing a job is a significant milestone, we now possess tangible data that demonstrates our stakeholders find impact in their interactions with Daily Work that go far beyond finding one job.

As we embrace the season of generosity, we kindly invite you to deepen your commitment to Daily Work and the aspirations of our job seekers. Our journey thus far fills us with pride, but the path ahead beckons with myriad opportunities to transform our community into a place where every individual possesses the resources, connections, and opportunities to shape their future. Your support is the cornerstone of this vision. Thank you for being here.

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Ten years ago, Board Chair Mari Jo Long was looking to launch her nonprofit career and applied for a part-time Daily Work position with Executive Director Julie Hoff. “I was completely underqualified, and I didn’t get the job. But with Julie being Julie, she kept in touch,” says Mari Jo.

Mari Jo ended up taking employment with Project for Pride in Living, an influential nonprofit that specializes in housing stability and career readiness. A few years later, Julie reached out asking if Mari Jo would join the Daily Work Board. “I saw it as an opportunity to develop my nonprofit leadership and governance experience,” she remarks. What Mari Jo got was a deeper passion for human-centric service work.

Now, as an experienced nonprofit professional, Mari Jo observes how many organizations focus on a narrow range of services, directing clients elsewhere for additional needs, noting that the pressure for organizational efficiency and robust outcomes has led to a fragmented service system. Consequently, people are burdened with coordinating numerous appointments, managing various deadlines, and arranging transportation. They repeatedly recount their stories, fill out extensive paperwork, and submit applications to multiple agencies.

The system fails to effectively support individuals who lack essential resources like transportation, childcare, and financial means. Especially for those facing language barriers, maneuvering through myriad agencies and understanding their specific requirements becomes an overwhelming challenge.

“They bounce around in a system that is supposed to support them, and they become disenfranchised,” Mari Jo notes. “Instead of offering empowerment and assistance, the system pushes them to the margins.”

“No one else does what Daily Work does.”

DW’s ability to address this pivotal issue is what caught Mari Jo’s attention. “The impact that Daily Work has in supporting the changes that job seekers are looking for is incredibly valuable. No one else does what Daily Work does.”

By truly hearing each job seeker’s story, case managers offer more than just task lists; they coach individuals on system navigation and advocate when necessary. Daily Work ensures someone is there to talk through challenges, identify deadlines, and clarify expectations.

“Everyone in the industry will say, ‘We don’t have time to provide that level of service.’ Well, Daily Work doesn’t either, but we do it because that is the level of support that’s needed for someone with so few resources to be successful. So, yes, we prioritize individual impacts over quantity and business efficiencies,” Mari Jo emphasizes.

Mari Jo’s challenge is to increase DW’s resources to sustain this holistic programming approach. “We operate because people pour their heart, soul, and life into this work, but at the end of the day, Daily Work needs to be staffed more appropriately and to offer more competitive salaries and benefits. We also need a space that provides the privacy necessary to have deep and personal conversations with job seekers. No one else treats every individual with the level of respect, compassion, and understanding that Daily Work trains into their social work interns, volunteers, and staff. It is truly a model of excellence on how to make transformational impacts, and I’m here to support that.”



2023 Sunflower Award

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

This year, we honor a gentleman who has been donating to Daily Work since 2013. He was introduced to DW through a friend and just kept on giving. Without prompting, reminders, or programming, Mr. Anonymous has faithfully contributed each and every month since 2013. And this kind of longevity has worked to create a stable foundation for us to build staff and programming.

We don’t get a lot of donors like Mr. Anonymous. People traditionally think of giving as an annual or point-in-time thing. To sustain a monthly gift for 10 years is exceptional, and we thank you for your commitment and trust. We hope we do you proud, and look forward to what the next 10 years will bring.



From Volunteer Case Manager Linda López

Sometimes, we get job seekers looking for more than a job – they want a career. For career-minded people, making a decision from the thousands of options can be overwhelming! One powerful tool to use is job shadowing. However, it can be difficult to find someone in their field of interest.

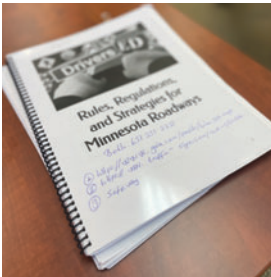
I am creating a database of potential volunteers willing to allow a person to shadow them at work. If you are passionate about your profession and would be willing to give a couple of hours to a job seeker, let me know! Contact linda@daily-work.org.

Why Is It So Hard to Get a in Minnesota?!

Anyone with a teenager understands that getting a driver's license in Minnesota is a difficult, high-stress experience. And this is even with a process intentionally designed for American teens. The challenges intensify for adults with fewer resources such as the time, money, or people in their network with transportation, and more so for those still learning computer skills or English.

“When you look at the languages the driver's manual is translated into, you begin to wonder if someone is tracking whether the system is really helping the people it is set out to help,” notes Executive Director Julie Hoff. “We've got manuals in Spanish, Somali, and Hmong (which is great), but many of today's new arrivals speak Pashto, Dari, Oromo, Arabic, and Amharic.” And without driver's licenses, there are more people whose careers and incomes are restricted or even in jeopardy.

“For one of my students, he's the guy who checks you in at the gate and ensures everyone's safety,” says Eric, founder of Change Drivers who partners with Daily Work to provide driving lessons to job seekers. “He gets up at 3:30 a.m. to get to work for a 6:00 a.m. shift because of the bus route. If I drove him in, he'd be there in 15 minutes. With a license, he could work more or have more time for his kids.”



To get a driver's license, people must pass two tests: a written exam (“knowledge test”), and a skills test (aka “road” or “behind-the-wheel test”). The driver's manual, which the written permit test is based on, is nearly 100 pages of technical information and sometimes obscure facts. For the skills test, interpreters are not allowed, and it requires executing one maneuver after another with several automatic fails.

“The language barriers for immigrants taking the permit test, with its technical vocabularies that are classically white-Minnesotan, is almost comical,” remarks Allan, who volunteers as a permit-testing coach. “How do you translate ‘When carrying a canoe on top of your vehicle, it cannot stick out more than 3 feet from your front bumper’ to someone who just arrived from a war-torn country?”

“Questions such as ‘What time of day are moose and deer most active?’ or ‘How many feet do you have to be behind someone to use your high beams?’ are technical, particular to a moment on the road, and sometimes culturally specific.”

For people new to the U.S., to Minnesota, or who think in the metric system, passing the permit test is often more of an English language or cultural competency feat. And for adults, there are few resources to learn it all. For the permit

test, most people are on their own, using the internet to try to absorb the material. Driving schools are often full, expensive, and don't fully meet the needs of new arrivals and English-language learners.

With the help of Change Drivers and volunteers, Daily Work is developing interventions related to all the hurdles in the process, including support for scheduling exams, paying fees, car access and practice drive time, and permit test prep. "It comes down to taking practice tests over and over," states Allan, who volunteers for three hours every Saturday to coach through the driver's manual with the help of an interpreter.

"We have a shortage of workers, and there is so much potential with highly motivated people who can produce and help boost our economy," says Eric. "But they need driver's licenses and cars to get to those jobs."



Trying to Learn the Rules of the Road



Navigating Continued from page 1

However, studying the driver's manual and passing the permit test, adapting to driving in America, and then succeeding at the behind-the-wheel test, especially without a personal vehicle and basic English proficiency, was an immense challenge requiring support from numerous individuals.

At each stage, Khushal credits Daily Work with assisting him, whether it was accompanying him to immigration appointments, setting up driver's test dates, or supplying a car and driver for the road exam, to name just a few areas regularly tackled during his bimonthly meetings .

One year later, Khushal has his driver's license, a job, and a car. "I'm working on the first steps now. I need to learn the language better and then maybe take some courses. I want to have my own business, either a store or a restaurant." He is also focused on bringing his wife here and, hopefully, his mother, father, and brother.

"It is difficult to come to a new country," says Khushal. "But I am happy because I'm in the U.S. and I have some peace now."

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