



Refugee children visit FIS as honorary attendees of a fundraiser/dance performance

FIS Reaches Out

A Community Shows it Cares

"How can I help?" has become a common question at a time when thousands of refugees arrive in Germany every week. They are no longer "the other" on our television screens: they are (in) our world.

Many feel instant compassion and decide to extend a helping hand. This is altruism: not just a feeling, but a decision to live beyond a social morality of "do no harm," a blend of intuitive compassion with a moral compass driving a practice to help those in need regardless of origin, gender or creed.

Supporting effective altruism and educating students to instinctively lend a hand to those in need regardless of their differences is an integral part of the FIS mission to inspire social responsibility. FIS actively supports a plethora of altruistic practice opportunities from the homeroom or playfield to the local community and global arena. Martha

Boston-Majetic, FIS parent and volunteer, highlighted 20 of the school's service organizations in her February 2015 FIS World article "We Act!"

The school's practice of helping refugees in the local community is not new. Vera Thiers, FIS Marketing and Outreach Manager, points out: "FIS has been helping refugees for years through donations of computer equipment, hosting parties and fundraising events, and organizing student volunteer, tutoring and mentoring projects and initiatives."

Recently, the school created a Refugee Task Force to work with local authorities to define the most effective way for FIS to help incoming refugees. Task Force work has resulted in the school adding library resources and bringing in guest speakers to educate community members on worldwide refugee crises; organizing volunteers to help teenage refugees

learn German through its Rosetta Stone language learning software on campus; sponsoring a home in Bad Homburg for a refugee family; working in tandem with other international school students to create stories in both German and Arabic; and instituting a new support program called "B Helpful" to collect "B" items needed by the refugee communities in our area: Backpacks, Books and Bicycles.

Knowing how and where to help is crucial in offering support. In early October, Assistant Upper School Principal, Daniel Cowan, helped welcome more than 200 refugees arriving by bus at 2:30 in the morning to a registration center in Oberursel. Annelie Nassar, FIS service learning champion, had told Daniel about the need for volunteer greeters, knowing that he spoke some Arabic after several years of living in Syria and Egypt. The two stood in receiving lines in the middle of the night welcoming



The school's Refugee Task Force working to create new support initiatives



New refugee library resources for FIS



Frederik S. (right), Junior IB Student

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getting a realistic view of the situation of refugees in Germany, and being aware of what is needed most at a given time in one's community. "People who want to help should contact help centers in their community – not just go there and drop anything they want to give away, or make assumptions about refugees' needs."

The Goldberg family, whose son just graduated from FIS this past year, supports this view. In early September, they spent two days at the new registration center in Neu Isenburg sorting donations. Their original intention had been to drive there, donate basic hygiene supplies, and

MORE INFORMATION:

BAMF
bamf.de/EN

The website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees publishes extensive information in English about the integration and care for migrants and refugees in Germany.

PEOPLE LIKE ME
peoplelikeme.hr.de

Website shows up-to-date information about what is needed and where in the state of Hesse.

FLÜCHTLINGSHILFE
fluechtlingshilfe-htk.de

Site includes a clickable map to all volunteer organizations in each of the Hochtaunus districts.

return home. But once at the center, they saw the dire need to help sort out what they described as "unbelievable amounts of clothes" so they stayed on, returning the next day.

FIS Grade 11 student Frederik S. has also found an effective way to get involved. While visiting the refugee center in Kronberg with his mother, he came up with an idea. "I like to help people and I love football," he said. And so he proposed a football game every weekend. His suggestion became a reality, and for the past year, Frederik has been playing football and speaking German with refugees in his community for two hours every Sunday.

Many members of the FIS Community are currently extending a helping hand, and it is not surprising: FIS attracts people who care. Daniel Cowan went home at 04:00 that night, and was back at school at 08:00. "I forgot to make coffee that morning," he confesses. Would he do it again? I asked Daniel. "Absolutely. Any time they call."

Maria Monteiro,
FIS Parent

and directing refugees to separate tents for medical screenings: Daniel guiding the men to their tent, and Annelie, who is fluent in Arabic, helping the women and children to theirs.

Susanne von Engelhardt, FIS parent and regular volunteer at a refugee help center, highlights that "information is critical to help effectively at the point when so many people are coming." She means