

SDOP Funded Grant Example

Taste of Peace helps refugees to flourish as purveyors of sweet and savory treats

Taste of Peace “New Neighbors” (TOPNN) is a ministry that helps refugees to market their sweet and savory treats in Ohio. (Contributed photo)



After leaving difficult situations in their home countries, a group of refugee women in central Ohio is learning to be culinary entrepreneurs in the United States.

The women from Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Venezuela are part of Taste of Peace “New Neighbors” (TOPNN), a ministry that helps them to market their sweet and savory treats to farmers market patrons and other customers in the Columbus area.

“Our mission is to work with, assist and provide equitable opportunities and enfranchisement for our local refugee population within the Greater Columbus area, specifically in the northwest portion of the city,” said Irma Chon, director of Taste of Peace.

“The purpose of TOPNN is to help our diverse cultural friends by providing the tools, resources and opportunities to create economic stability and support” as they rebuild their lives.

Between seven and 11 women take part in the program, selling food at the Hilliard Farm Market during warmer months as well as harnessing other opportunities that arise. For example, “K,” a refugee from Sudan, was able to cater a corporate luncheon for 40 people after being approached at the market.

Participants in Taste of Peace also get the chance to receive training, including learning about business, menu and logo development from a local coffee shop entrepreneur. “Because of this training, our ladies were able to create their own logos and menus as well as learn some tips on how to expand their own catering businesses within and outside the farmers market,” Chon said.

“Since moving to America, I found I really appreciate EVERYTHING that is available here,” “R,” a refugee who fled Afghanistan in 2021, notes in her bio. “I really am so grateful for the welcome I received when I came here, not even knowing how to speak English. I enjoy sharing my Afghan culture and food with my new friends.”

“M,” a refugee from Eritrea, says in her bio that the U.S. is “a nice place with nice people that are so helpful. We came from [a] very dangerous situation in our country and spent 12 years in Israel. Again, we needed to move for safety and we’re grateful to be here, especially for my two children — aged 9 and 6. You have to try my injera bread with the vegetarian sauce!”

In addition to sharing their food at the farmers market, participants in the program gain business exposure through dinners that serve as opportunities to share their background and skills. As part of these Taste of Peace Cultural Exchange meals, the women, their families and cuisine are introduced to the community.

For participants, the dinners are “an opportunity to increase their income along with showcasing their food for future catering opportunities,” Chon said.

Taste of Peace, a ministry of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, is a partner of the [Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People](#), and having SDOP’s support has been a big plus, Chon said.

“Because SDOP has been generous to us over the past three years and has been willing to invest in the lives of these ladies, we have been able to expand their business development and see consistent growth in their individual lives,” she said. “We are sincerely thankful to SDOP for helping to make a difference in the lives of these precious ladies!”

Darla Carter, Communications Strategist, Interim Unified Agency ([Click here to read original PNS Story](#))