

# How Donating Cars Transforms Lives of Refugees in Reston



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# Appraiser Blog

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Imagine landing in a new country with your dreams packed in a suitcase and the hope of a fresh start in your heart, only to find the path ahead riddled with obstacles. For refugees, the journey to rebuild their lives in a foreign land is fraught with challenges, and something as basic as transportation can become a significant barrier. Enter Rides for Refugees, a Reston-based charity that's driving change one car at a time. This nonprofit is not just donating vehicles; it's providing a lifeline to local refugees, empowering them to pursue new opportunities and reclaim their independence. In this article, we dive into the heartwarming stories of those whose lives have been transformed by this initiative, uncovering the profound impact of mobility on their journey towards a brighter future.



### Transforming Lives Through Mobility

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## A Beacon of Hope for New Beginnings

Rides for Refugees, a visionary nonprofit organization from Reston, has become a beacon of hope for refugees striving to establish new lives in the U.S. By donating cars to refugees at no cost, this charity is literally and figuratively putting them in the driver's seat of their future. Last week's donation of two cars to Afghan refugees, Mohamed and Zed, is a testament to the life-changing assistance Rides for Refugees provides. Mohamed, a law graduate, and Zed, a college-educated individual with a history of working alongside U.S. military and defense staff, represent the resilience and determination to thrive against all odds. Their stories highlight the crucial role that transportation plays in accessing employment opportunities and achieving economic independence.

## The Journey of Rides for Refugees

Founded in 2022 by Jacqui Olkin, a Reston native with a big heart and a bigger vision, Rides for Refugees embarked on its mission to facilitate mobility for refugees after witnessing the hardships faced by her friends, Ukrainian refugees Slava and Nina. Olkin's insight into the pivotal role of transportation in fostering self-reliance among refugees led to the establishment of this charity. With a national scope and a rigorous application process, Rides for Refugees collaborates with resettlement agencies and other nonprofits to identify refugees in dire need of transportation solutions.

## A Path to Independence

The story of Rides for Refugees underscores a stark reality: transportation is a critical, yet often overlooked, factor in the successful resettlement of refugees. With 45% of Americans lacking access to public transit, the challenge is even more pronounced for newcomers trying to navigate their way to self-sufficiency. Vehicles are not just a means of transport; they are vessels of opportunity, enabling refugees to seek and sustain employment, attend educational programs, and integrate into their new communities.

## Conclusion

The initiative of Rides for Refugees shines a light on the profound impact that mobility can have on the lives of refugees. By providing them with cars, this charity is not only facilitating their physical movement but is also propelling them towards achieving their dreams and independence in a new land. The stories of Mohamed and Zed are just the

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beginning. As Rides for Refugees continues to grow, it hopes to steer many more refugees towards a future filled with hope and possibilities. This is a call to action for all of us to recognize and support the critical role of transportation in the resettlement process. After all, a journey of a thousand miles towards a new life starts with a single ride.