



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gulf Coast JFCS to Hold Run for Refugees Feb 2

On February 2, 2020, Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services (Gulf Coast JFCS) will host its first Run for Refugees 5K to increase visibility of and support for refugees in the Tampa Bay area. Gulf Coast JFCS proudly greets refugees arriving in the US, connecting them to housing, providing for household goods, making connections to necessary medical and other services, helping to enroll their children in school and assisting them in accessing employers who will help them achieve self-sufficiency. The work Gulf Coast JFCS has done on behalf of displaced individuals, dating back to the 1980s and their work resettling Russian Jews, has changed Tampa Bay for the better, as our community has been enriched by the diversity of our refugee neighbors and friends.

This work, borne out of the tragic legacy of the Holocaust and the commitment to ensuring those who are persecuted and displaced may find safety in new communities, is more important than ever. Gulf Coast JFCS is working to preserve its legacy while being mindful as to our nation's history of welcoming refugees, like Felicien.

Felicien was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and lived with his family in a United Nations refugee camp for 20 years. Felicien recalls his youth, walking through the jungle, afraid of violent attacks and looking for food and water. He describes their experience as "miserable and painful," leaving them hopeless. However, in 2015, he and his family received the opportunity to resettle in the United States, and his life changed. He was full of "excitement, living a dream come true."

Through the support of the Gulf Coast JFCS Refugee Resettlement and Replacement Program, Felicien became self-sufficient and began to live the life that he had always dreamed. Felicien is a neighborhood organizer and an interpreter for Gulf Coast JFCS and Project Prosper (a non-profit working to empower immigrants with financial tools). Currently, he works at Greenview Manor, as the Social Activities Director, and at a Group Home for individuals with special needs as a Care Giver. In March 2019, Felicien and his family received the keys to their Habitat for Humanity home after months of working hard, volunteering and participating in education classes. "Life today is much better...I feel that I am home," Felicien shares.

Gulf Coast JFCS needs your help to continue changing lives like Felicien's. By supporting the Run for Refugees, you will help families arriving in the US pursue their lives free from persecution. Your support will affirm the role of refugees as part of America's narrative. Your support will undoubtedly serve as a positive example for partners across the region whom Gulf Coast JFCS hopes will also join in "welcoming the stranger."

Race details including sponsor opportunities and registration are available online at:

<https://gulfcoastjewishfamilyandcommunityservices.org/run-for-refugees/>

Register early: 5K: \$35 until midnight 1/31/20; \$40 race day

1 Mile: \$20 until midnight 1/31/20; \$25 race day can be found online at:

Gulf Coast JFCS is a non-religious social services agency. The agency's significant portfolio of programs support children, families, and individuals in the areas of child welfare, behavioral and mental health, Jewish Family Services and Holocaust survivors, refugee resettlement & support for survivors of torture, elder services and employment services. Gulf Coast JFCS supports more than 30,000 Floridians annually, from all backgrounds, across its 40-county service area.

Learn more about Gulf Coast JFCS at <https://gulfcoastjewishfamilyandcommunityservices.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/GulfCoastJFCS/>

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