Ethiopian refugees welcomed by Draper residents

By Ashley Schulties

Meeting someone new from a different country can be intimidating but for members of the Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church meeting new people is a time to give service and build friendships. Recognizing the need to help immigrants and refugees coming to Utah, Catholic Community Services has a social program titled the Immigrant and Refugee Resettlement Program. The goal of this program is to help refugees and immigrants during their time of adaptation to the lifestyle and culture of the United States with the end goal being self-sufficiency.

This past year Catholic Community Services has asked local parishes to help with an extension of this program called Welcoming the Stranger, where local parish members teach the family skills and help them feel connected to the community. Members of the Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church in Draper were the first in the valley to embrace this program. Currently, they are helping a family of 10 from Ethiopia.

Katherine Mahoney, team leader for the Welcoming the Stranger program, explained that her team is assigned a family and make sure children get enrolled in school. They also help provide job skills and opportunities for working age members of families and make sure children get enrolled in school.

“The experiences we are having with this family are so rewarding,” Mahoney said. “As I have gotten to know them and taught them, I have gotten so much more from them than I give. I always leave feeling

The rest of the team included senior Hali Jansen; juniors Erin Fitzpatrick, Katherine McIntyre, Lauren Larshich and Megan Townsend; sophomores Brittny Nielsen and freshwomen Cherise Tua and Annie Tice.

Nellermoe was assisted by Todd Holzhauer and Kristie Long and credits their expertise and relationship with the players as factors in Juan Diego’s successful season.

“Nothing would have been accomplished well without amazing assistant coaches and parent volunteers,” Nellermoe said. “A huge thank you [goes] to parents who stepped up.”

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