

MAKING THE RGV "HOME"

The Journey of a Syrian Refugee



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When Syrian refugee Fadil arrived in the United States in April 2021, he found himself embarking on a life-changing journey. Fadil does not remember a time when his country was not facing constant conflict and, since 2011, the war has separated the majority of his 11 siblings. At a young age, Fadil realized that he might be displaced from his country at some point in his life. When he eventually fled Syria for the United States, he hoped for an opportunity to pursue his own American dream: finally achieving safety while supporting his parents back home.



When Fadil arrived at the South Texas border, he hoped to follow the path of many immigrants before him to New York City - what he considered the "City of Dreams." Instead, he found himself detained in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody after his arrival. Detention weighed heavily on his psyche, and Fadil quickly felt helpless and frustrated with the inability to support his family in the way he had hoped he could while in the United States.

Following his arrival to the United States, Fadil met many individuals on ProBAR's Legal team including a ProBAR Staff Attorney who helped him secure release from detention. When Fadil was released, he had no family or friends in the area to support or sponsor him as he began to create a life for himself in the U.S. Ultimately, he was welcomed by La Posada Providencia, a Rio Grande Valley-based organization that provided him with shelter and a supportive environment while determining his next steps.

For many years, La Posada has assisted migrants in similar situations with lodging, educational services, and connections to resources that support them during transitions to other regions, or while building a life in the region. The experiences and life skills people gain during their time at La Posada are incredibly impactful. The organization allows migrants to stand on their own two feet and pursue their goals once their immigration proceedings have concluded. A key aspect of ProBAR's core services includes connections to services. In Fadil's case, our team was able to connect him with the sisters at La Posada Providencia as his situation, like those of other individuals the organization assists, left him seeking last-minute refuge.

Once at La Posada, Fadil connected with ProBAR Senior Clinician Raul Martinez. ProBAR's clinicians serve as a guide and support local clients as they transition to life within the United States. The work is done collaboratively; both the clinician and client work together on legal commitments, relocation readiness, and other needs for social services that may come up. After Fadil's release from immigration detention, the services ProBAR's Clinical team provided played a big role in solidifying his perspective and goals.

Shortly after meeting with Raul, Fadil requested support to plan for his participation in his Muslim faith's holy month of Ramadan. ProBAR's Clinical team was then tasked with arranging a place where he could participate in the practice of his faith during this time of prayer and reflection. With the support of La Posada, Raul was able to locate a nearby Mosque and coordinate Fadil's transportation and lodging. This proved to be a learning experience for everyone involved. Not only did it provide exposure to ProBAR staff about the Muslim faith and the existing community in the area, but it also allowed Fadil to connect with people in the Rio Grande Valley who reminded him of home.

Today, Fadil has spent nearly two years at La Posada, and he has learned and accomplished a tremendous amount in this time. He has demonstrated perseverance and dedication by working diligently to learn English and Spanish. He has also taken ownership of achieving his goals. At one point, Raul shared a link to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles site, and Fadil registered, scheduled a test, and received his driver's license by working through the process independently. Additionally, shortly after obtaining his work permit, Fadil sought a business license and began to contribute to an ongoing construction project at La Posada to expand their facilities to serve a higher number of immigrants and asylum-seekers. Not only was Fadil able to work towards his dream of providing for his family back in Syria, but he now anticipates making the Rio Grande Valley his permanent home. In the process, Fadil supports migrants in the situation he once found himself in.

Fadil continues working with ProBAR's Clinical team in hopes of finding support to make the area his home. Additionally, he would like to make the Rio Grande Valley community the main customer base for his new construction business. According to Senior Clinician Raul, this lengthy process proves its worth to advocates like himself. Raul shared that it is an incredibly empowering moment seeing clients going through this journey. Despite facing isolation, stress, and many unknowns during their lengthy processes, migrants remain fearless and are willing to do whatever it takes to achieve their dreams.

The impact that having access to this type of support during these particularly vulnerable times is immeasurable and far-reaching for the migrants ProBAR works with. Raul shared the following about his understanding of the Clinical team's role in the services ProBAR provides: "This might sound cliché, but it is meaningful work because we get to help other individuals in ways we might have never imagined. Communication, texting in their languages, being on their level - it forces clinicians to become more resourceful. Any time spent providing support and guidance with even the smallest things is important. Something as simple as providing contacts for housing is a life-changing thing. We know the system, bridge gaps, and work as a team to allow migrants to take an active role in bettering their circumstances."

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Time and time again, the impact of ProBAR's work goes beyond what happens in court. As a result, Fadil's initial dream of starting anew in New York City has altered completely. After receiving so much support from ProBAR, La Posada Providencia, and the Rio Grande Valley community as a whole, Fadil is now dedicating himself to his business, providing opportunities for migrants who find themselves in a situation like his own.

OPPORTUNITY



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