



Refugee Services continues its longstanding involvement with the Auckland International Cultural Festival which returns to the War Memorial Park, Wesley-Mt Roskill on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March from 10am.

This International Cultural Festival, organised by Auckland City Council in association with Refugee Services, celebrates Auckland's cultural diversity and the emerging confidence of the refugee and migrant communities as they take their place amongst the wider community to celebrate their cultural heritage.

"If people see our culture, we feel like we exist. We need our culture to be valued and respected by those around us. The festival is about being proud of who you are." says Burundian refugee Jean-Paul Bizoza.

Last year over 35,000 people from more than 40 nations celebrated their music, dance, flavours and arts and crafts at this increasingly popular one day free global village festival.

A special attraction this year is the inaugural "World Stories Tent", organised by Refugee Services, which will have the theme "People Who Make a Difference".

This will be a showcase of work from extraordinary people who help others in need, including our own volunteers who help refugees resettle on arrival to New Zealand.

One of the participants is Dawit Arshak, who came to New Zealand as a UN quota refugee from Ethiopia, will be speaking about his experience of returning to Ethiopia with Habitat for Humanity, to build houses for the people there.

As with previous years, the Welcoming Ceremony at the Festival will include speeches from Refugee Services and Auckland refugee communities, as well as governmental dignitaries.

Refugee Services is New Zealand's leading refugee resettlement agency. Over the past three decades we have assisted in the settlement of more than 40,000 refugees and their families and they can now be found in every sector of our increasingly diverse society.

Our unique 3-strand model of service delivery sees each arriving refugee and refugee family supported by a team that includes; professional social workers; cross-cultural workers and trained community volunteers.

Refugee Services' presence at the festival also provides a point of contact for people wanting to know more about how they can help refugees living in New Zealand.

People interested in helping refugees with donations of furniture or volunteering should contact the Auckland Office at (09) 621 0014 or go to [www.refugeeservices.org.nz](http://www.refugeeservices.org.nz)