

MICRO ENTERPRISE PROGRAM HELPS *Refugees Earn Income*

Growing up in a refugee camp in Nepal, Dibya Gurung earned extra money for her family by making and selling beaded jewelry. In 2009, **Lutheran Children and Family Service (LCFS)** resettled Dibya and her family to Lancaster County.

With a young child, and a second baby on the way, Dibya and her husband found it difficult to get by on just his salary, and she didn't want to put her son in day care and find a job as a housekeeper or factory worker. Then in August 2010, she discovered the LCFS Micro Enterprise (ME) Program.

The ME Program helps clients become self-sufficient, independent and financially healthy by using their arts/crafts talents to earn an income. It also lets the clients express themselves in a way that is conducive to their personal self-being.

Dibya enrolled in the ME program and took part in a jewelry making session. After the birth of her second child she was paired with volunteer mentor Jenny Lieber, who was already a successful jeweler. Together they created and implemented a marketing strategy. Dibya also learned how to navigate through and use, U.S. currency and pricing.

Currently Dibya has an exclusive sales contract with a Lancaster store. She is also selling her jewelry at local events and crafts fairs. Dibya feels great that she can contribute to her family financially through her art. Today, she has built a customer base, and will soon be ready to hire other refugees to help make and sell jewelry.

Wherever they come from, refugees bring with them a base of knowledge and skills. The ME Program has the philosophy that the best way to support refugees to have fulfilling, meaningful lives is to allow them to build upon their area of specialized skill. The ME Program works most specifically with individuals with skills in the arts, which is broadly interpreted to include fields such as embroidery, painting, or hair braiding.

The program is eager for volunteers who can donate their time teaching clients the English language, financial literacy, mentoring artisans, or helping them make connections in the community.

