June 27, 2022

To whom it may concern;

I met Mohamed Kamash when he arrived in the US, as a client of IRIS's, in July 2014. I was then IRIS's health & wellness coordinator, and part of my responsibilities were to ensure each newcomer received a timely medical assessment and was orientated to our healthcare system. It was during this time that I got to know Mohamed pretty well.

During the first couple of months of his arrival I taught him how to take the bus to the medical clinic, how to get to the pharmacy, fill prescriptions, schedule his own medical appointments, request an interpreter, and resolve medical bills through his insurance provider. On one occasion I spent hours with Mohamed during a long medical visit and on another I gave him a ride home in the late evening after his appointment at the refugee clinic was finished. I taught a cultural orientation class he attended, and generally further assisted him in navigating our complex and confusing medical system.

To celebrate the 2014 World Cup, IRIS organized its own World Cup, promoted both to clients and community members as a way for everyone to come together around the love of soccer. Mohamed participated in this highly successful event and was placed on the same team as my daughter and a friend of hers. Watching some of her games I also witnessed his style of play, talented in soccer for sure, but importantly he was a team player and respected and encouraged the young women on the field as well. Sometime after this Mohamed invited my daughter and I for lunch along with several other friends and iris clients who played on the same team. He prepared a delicious Iraqi feast for all, and it was an enjoyable afternoon.

Mohamed worked hard to improve his English and soon was proficient enough to avail himself to IRIS as a volunteer interpreter. This was a great service to the health & wellness department as we had no budget for an interpreter but had a high need for interpreters to meet growing numbers of incoming Arabic-speaking clients. Having Mohamed available to interpret by phone, text, or in-person was very beneficial to us. All the work he did for me and my interns was done as a volunteer and always with a friendly smile.

Over the years that I have known Mohamed I have always found him to be a young man of good character: responsible, reliable, friendly, kind, and ready and willing to be of service to others.

Leslie Koons, MPH
Project coordinator
IRIS