FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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TAMPA CELEBRATES WORLD REFUGEE DAY JUNE 20th, 2008

Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) and the University of South Florida International Affairs Department will hold a news conference on Friday, June 20th, to commemorate World Refugee Day, designated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to honor refugees worldwide. All other Tampa Bay area refugee resettlement organizations—Catholic Charities, Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services and the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture—will join LSF in celebrating the many contributions refugees make to their communities.

The event, beginning at 2:00 pm., will be held at USF TECO auditorium in School of Education of the USF Tampa Campus. Mayor Iorio has issued a special Proclamation naming June 20th “World Refugee Day in the City of Tampa,” and asking all citizens to “Join me in expressing appreciation to Lutheran Services Florida and all of the organizations involved in this effort for their many contributions to the citizens of our community.” Tampa joins cities in more than 100 countries around the world celebrating World Refugee Day.

The conference will focus on the courage of refugees and the contributions they make to their communities. In particular, African refugees will be a special focus, as an expression of solidarity with Africa, which hosts the most refugees. The event will feature a panel of African refugees from diverse countries who will speak about their personal experiences. The media will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with refugees and resettlement staff.

“On this special day we will honor refugees in our community and remember those still waiting in camps throughout the world,” said Rubis Castro, Regional Director. She added, “There are approximately 19 million refugees in the world—80% of whom are women and children—and this news conference is an opportunity to share information with the people in our community.”

Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) is a statewide, non-profit, human care agency dedicated to helping all people in need regardless of religious affiliation, age, or national origin. Since the LSF Refugee Resettlement Program began nearly 25 years ago, over 200,000 refugees have received help to build new lives in freedom. The Agency has 65 programs located across Florida and has provided assistance to nearly 750,000 children and families in need.