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## **MNA Partners with Refugee Development Center to Aid Gardner**

*The student-run painting project is designed to help young refugees lead community initiatives.*

**LANSING, MI April 8, 2016** – Michigan Nonprofit Association announced today that it is joining with Lansing’s Refugee Development Center in an initiative to clean and paint the interior of Gardner Law, Leadership, and Government Academy on April 13, 2016.

The mural project is funded by Michigan Nonprofit Association with a grant from Youth Service America. It is part of Global Youth Service Days, a program that promotes youth volunteerism worldwide. The Refugee Development Center serves the needs of newly arrived refugees in mid-Michigan, providing youth programs, language classes, and advocacy for a refugee community of 13,000. Among its clients are Afghans, Bosnians, Burmese, Bhutanese, Burundians, Congolese (DR and Brazzaville), Croats, Cubans, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Hmong, Iranians, Iraqis, Kurds, Liberians, Meskhetian Turks, Somali, Bantu Somali, Sudanese, and Vietnamese, along with small numbers from many other countries around the world.

Students in refugee programs are learning English and adjusting to a new life in Lansing. Managing school projects helps them to feel more connected to their new community, says RDC youth program leader Bruce Winters. “The students have really taken all the initiative in creating and implementing this project,” says Winters. “They want to make sure their school is welcoming for newcomers and that their cultures are visibly represented.”

Volunteers from Michigan Nonprofit Association will mentor the students as they paint, to help the youth learn leadership skills like teamwork and conflict resolution. MNA President and CEO Donna Murray-Brown is pleased to support the project. “Diversity and inclusion are core values at MNA,” said Murray-Brown. “This project will help the students forge closer ties with kids from different backgrounds and show that they are resilient survivors who provide valuable insight and perspective within their community.”

Project leaders report that all volunteer positions on this project are filled, but community members who wish to lend their support are kindly invited make donations to the Refugee Development Center ([www.RefugeeDevelopmentCenter.org](http://www.RefugeeDevelopmentCenter.org)) or to Michigan Nonprofit Association ([www.mnaonline.org](http://www.mnaonline.org)).

## About Michigan Nonprofit Association

Michigan Nonprofit Association is a statewide membership organization dedicated to serving the diverse nonprofit sector through advocacy, civic engagement, technology, and training. MNA manages multiple programs and affiliates including Highway T, The LEAGUE Michigan, Michigan Campus Compact, and is a sponsoring organization for AmeriCorps State and AmeriCorps VISTA.

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