Olga Casaretti

Olga Casaretti at her desk at IRC. Behind her, artwork created by an Afghan girl after Casaretti helped unite the girl and her father. It had been seven years since they’d seen each other.

**First, I wonder if you could tell me a little about your position at the International Rescue Committee in Dallas. How did you end up there, what is your position, and how do you spend your days?**

I currently work at The International Rescue Committee (IRC) Dallas, TX. I am an Immigration Caseworker and also accredited with the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), which means that I can legally represent clients seeking benefits with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS). Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC delivers lifesaving care to people fleeing conflict and natural disaster. I started working for the IRC San Jose, CA in September 2015 as a volunteer. One month later, I was hired full time. While in California, I spent much time conducting outreach and advocacy for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) and assisting numerous families with various immigration services such as citizenship, green cards, family petitions, and many others. Later in 2016, my family relocated to North Texas and the organization transferred me to the Dallas office. My daily schedule is typically fast paced with several appointments. Although we serve the immigrant community as a whole, the majority of our services are for refugees. My typical day starts with review of applications from our department and our satellite office in West Texas. There are always green cards appointments for big families (up to families of nine). Currently, the refugees that we resettle come from the DR Congo, Burma, Iran, and Syria. I also spend a lot of time contacting the USCIS and DOS for case inquiries and providing consultations.

**How did your time at USU help prepare you for the current work you’re doing? Are there any specific skills that have been useful to you?**

USU helped me develop writing and research skills. My training has been particularly instrumental for grant writing. As a legal provider, I must support my claims with evidence-based sources. USU provided me with research skills I can use in any field.

**What do you love most about your work at IRC? Any particular experiences that have had a lasting impact on you?**

When I started working for the IRC, I was passionate about the humanitarian field but I had no idea about the impact that the stories of my clients would have on my life. It has been an incredibly meaningful journey. I have worked with victims of war, torture, rape, family violence, and many other tragedies. I am amazed by the resilience and strength that these individuals all share, despite everything that they were forced to endure. It is very difficult to choose one experience that has had a lasting impact on me because they all have. My favorite part of the process is when the family members that my clients have not seen for years finally arrive. Knowing that I have been a part of their reunification is highly rewarding.