

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

The objective of this section is to highlight representative NAO nonprofit members of various sizes, geographic locations and subsectors to showcase the great work our members are doing across Oregon!



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What does your organization do? Who does it serve:

RDBO promotes justice for disabled refugees and immigrants through:

- Legal representation enabling refugees and immigrants to obtain the federal disability benefits for which they are qualified;
- Training for refugees and immigrants, their families and their communities to empower them to understand and support disabled refugees and immigrants as they seek healthcare, explore options ranging from disability benefits to vocational opportunities and seek services in the community;
- Training healthcare providers, social security decision-makers, and judges who interact with refugees and immigrants in cultural competency and understanding of the refugee and immigrant experience; and
- Advocacy for public policy changes needed to ensure just treatment for disabled refugees and immigrants.

What has been your organization's biggest accomplishment lately?

As a new nonprofit, our accomplishment is surviving our first year! In all seriousness, we are proud to have accomplished the following in only our first 18 months:

1. Successfully persuaded Multnomah County to drop a rule that would have imposed a fee for its patients to obtain the assistance of their healthcare providers in documenting their disability.

2. Within only one month of the filing of our pending class action lawsuit in federal court, the Social Security Administration issued a ruling that clarified the right of Special Immigrants (Afghan and Iraqi individuals who aided the U.S. military in their countries by taking on the dangerous role of interpreters) who are disabled to obtain disability benefits -- this was already in the law as of 2009 but for the last eight years, nationwide, SSA had denied the right of these individuals to obtain benefits or to keep benefits.
3. Won 85%-90% of the individual disability cases we have brought, many of them at the earliest stage of the process, thereby sparing these refugees the hardship of a two-year wait.
4. Built a wonderful board that is nearly 80 percent made of refugees and immigrants, who hail from nine different nations, and who bring their dedication and wisdom to everything we do.

How has being an NAO member helped you succeed in furthering your organization's mission?

NAO is a terrific resource. As a founder who had never done this before, I found the resources invaluable in understanding all of the steps I would need to take to successfully create a nonprofit.

My appreciation and gratitude to the many executive directors of other nonprofits who have generously given their time and shared their experiences with me.

*Special thanks to Cheryl Coon,
Executive Director, Refugee Disability Benefits of Oregon*