“I feel safe. And I feel welcome.”

This young refugee is making his new home in the United States a more inclusive place.

When you ask 16-year-old Nabil about his favorite thing about living in America, you’ll discover how much he loves playing forward on his high school soccer team. His favorite courses in school are the computer classes where he’s learning how to program, not just play video games. And he loves donuts—lots and lots of chocolate donuts.

While Seattle’s notorious damp weather doesn’t make his list, the city has become home for Nabil and his family. They settled here by way of Jordan after they fled their home in Homs, Syria, which has been called “the capital of the revolution,” where civilians had become common collateral damage in the country’s civil war. Nabil’s father decided that the family—including Nabil, his brother and two younger sisters—had to leave before they, too, suffered unimaginable losses.

“My father wants us to have a good life and good future,” Nabil says. “That has become true, because now we are safe in Seattle. I feel safe. And I feel welcome here.” Settling in the United States has provided Nabil and his family with a chance to start fresh in a welcoming community, free of fear. The new setting has also brought Nabil closer to achieving his dream—to become a software engineer—and to his passion for helping others.

The transition from Syria to rainy Seattle was challenging for Nabil and his family, but the humanitarian nonprofit International Rescue Committee has made them feel welcome. The organization helped the family find a home and the children register for school. They also ran special programs for recent transplants like Nabil, in which the kids got to cheer for the Seattle Sounders and visit the aquarium where they witnessed an octopus and otters for the first time.

Nabil is striving to make Seattle even more welcoming for incoming refugees and his American-born neighbors. The 10th grader has volunteered with a local Muslim organization, offering food and water to local homeless people as they waited to get haircuts and new clothes.

And he acts as an informal guide for new classmates, translating assignments, explaining confusing class schedules and reassuring them that the English proficiency test isn’t as scary as it seems.

Helping newcomers is a family commitment. They all work together to host Syrian meals, take friends to appointments and show families around the neighborhood because they remember how comforting it was to grasp a hand outstretched in kindness. “We are family. Together, we can help them,” Nabil says.

Giving back makes him feel good. “I feel happy to see people smiling and laughing, not sad from the things that happened in Syria.” Building community helps Nabil grow roots here in Seattle. He hopes to eventually visit friends and loved ones in the Middle East, but he says his move to the United States is permanent. While he dreams of peace in his home country, he is making his American home a more welcoming place.