

## **Russian twin pianists offer hand to refugees**

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### **Body**

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**Twin** sisters from Russia whose piano prowess has won international acclaim are coming to Atlanta this month for a concert to benefit a **refugee** resettlement agency.

Julia and Irina Elkina were performing in concert halls in Russia by age 7 and honed their skills after coming to the United States, sharing the stage with respected conductors and playing frequently on National Public Radio.

They will perform at 7:30 p.m. April 26 at the Conant Performing Arts Center at Oglethorpe University, in a concert to benefit **Refugee** Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta, one of five nonprofit agencies in metro Atlanta that the federal government pays to resettle **refugees**.

The Rev. Sandra Mullins, the agency's executive director, said the organization hopes to attract 500 people and raise \$25,000 to help shepherd **refugees** into everyday life.

She said she hopes the concert raises awareness, too. "It's not understood how a **refugee** is different than an immigrant," Mullins said.

Immigrants typically come to the United States to earn money or join relatives. A **refugee** is someone outside his or her native country who can't return for fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a group, such as a social or ethnic group. Most flee war, unrest or persecution. The United States opened its doors last year to 52,000 of the roughly 12 million **refugees** worldwide.

"We really want to help educate people on the plight of **refugees**," Mullins said.

Her agency resettles roughly 350 **refugees** a year and helps an additional 900 already here. It works with community groups and religious congregations whose members volunteer to help orient **refugees**.

The Elkina sisters, who left Russia in 1993, "are sensitive to the issues" with which Mullins' agency deals. "They were willing to give their time to back an organization that resettles **refugees**," she said.

--- For ticket information: [www.rrisa.org](http://www.rrisa.org), e-mail [events@rrisa.org](mailto:events@rrisa.org) or call 404-622-2235, Ext. 232.

### **Graphic**

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Julia and Irina Elkina will perform April 26 at Oglethorpe University. / Special

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