

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

GRSI holds community sponsorship awareness event in Berlin

At the beginning of December, the GRSI hosted an event in Berlin that brought together German government and civil society representatives who lead the implementation of NesT, Germany's pilot program for the sponsorship of refugees. The event also added the voice of an experienced community sponsorship actor from the UK and a sponsor from Canada. Dedicated workshops during the day enabled the exchange of experiences and best practices for the implementation of community sponsorship programs, in particular with regards to outreach and communication strategies. The day closed with an informative evening reception about the German NesT program and the potential of community sponsorship. It was attended by a wider audience of interested actors and built awareness for the program. NesT has already mobilized 38 sponsor groups and enabled four entries of refugees since its launch in May 2019.

Refugees Settle in Richmond thanks to help of five local families (Canada)



Five families worked together to bring a refugee family to Richmond through Canada's Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program. This refugee sponsorship program allows for additional cost sharing, where the government support refugee families for the first six months, after which the sponsors take over the financial

responsibility. For Nicole Javadi, a second-time sponsor, refugee sponsorship is an important way to directly help people in vulnerable situations. After hearing the story of the young Syrian refugee, Alan Kurdi, who tragically drowned while crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2015, Javadi felt compelled to help however she could, and the BVOR program allowed her to do that. For Atosha Ngage and her son, a family originally from Congo who had spent a number of years in a refugee camp in Namibia, this has been life changing. Since arriving Ngage has welcomed another child, found a home, started a new job and is making plans to attend school to become an early-childhood educator.

Community spirit helped turn our coach house into haven for a refugee family (UK)

Alison Lockyer helped form the South Leicestershire Refugee Housing Committee, along with a dozen other volunteers, supported by local church groups and the Salvation Army. Alison's journey began when she and her husband decided to offer their converted coach house to those in need. However, there was no obvious process for that. Alison got in touch with Tim Finch, founding director of Sponsor Refugees, who explained how to engage in community sponsorship. Alison and her husband set up a public meeting to see if there was support in the community to resettle a refugee family. A committee consisting of more than a dozen volunteer was the result.

Alison and the South Leicestershire Refugee Housing Committee also had support from Reset, the charity leading community sponsorship in the UK, which provided useful information for the first time sponsors. The Salvation Army also provided safeguarding training and lessons learned from previous sponsorship experiences. Now the refugee family has arrived and settled into their new home, efforts begin on settling them into their community and help them work towards independence.

Syrian family arrive just in time for Christmas (Ireland)

"Road to Kinsale" sponsorship group has welcomed its first refugee family to Kinsale, less than a year since setting up. The group has sponsored a refugee

through Ireland's community sponsorship program developed by the Irish government in cooperation with the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, the Irish Red Cross, Nasc, Irish Refugee Council and the UNHCR. A welcoming committee met the family at Dublin Airport on December 22. The group's "grass roots initiative" has also been supported by the Kinsale Lions Cub and the community gardaí, as they helped the Road to Kinsale fundraise for the necessary financial support.

Refugee family reunites in Kamloops after over a decade apart (Canada)



Photo Credit: CFCJ Today/Kent Simmonds

After welcoming a Syrian refugee family in 2016, the Clearwater Sponsorship Group in Canada has accomplished their goal of reuniting a family separated for over a decade. Brothers Rojeh and Rodan Labbad arrived in Kamloops and have integrated well into the community, and starting a business, Shawarma Time. The brothers eventually approached the Clearwater Sponsorship Group about sponsoring the rest of their family to Canada from Lebanon. Their reunion recently became a reality as the community welcomed the brothers' family late **October**.

collected through university tuition, and over 93% of the 3, 100 students who voted approve of the levy.

Check out the **Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!**
Follow **@theGRSI** on Twitter for more updates on **#communitysponsorship**

"We feel like we are home": Newcomer families adapting well in Agassiz (Canada)

Two refugee families have recently resettled in the community of Agassiz, Canada, sponsored by the Agassiz Group of Churches Refugee Sponsorship Committee. The Mall family, originally from Pakistan, left in 2006, went first to Sri Lanka before eventually making their way to Malaysia. While in Malaysia they received a response to their request for help from the sponsorship committee in Agassiz, through the Mennonite Central Committee refugee sponsorship program, and subsequently submitted a UNHCR application in 2017.

At the same time the Agassiz Group of Churches Refugee Sponsorship Committee was going through the process of sponsoring another family, Gilbert Ndikumana and his family, who arrived just before the Malls. Ndikumana was originally displaced from Burundi to South Africa, along with his wife Amina Kizungu, who is originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the situation there was dangerous and they applied to the UN refugee Agency for protection in 2016.

Both families are settling in, they have joined church groups, and are looking for employment. Speaking of Agassiz, Zain Sunny said, "The community here has been very helpful to gain back what we lost ... we feel like we are home."

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN THE NEWS

- Key takeaways from the Global Refugee Forum
- Community Sponsorship as a Pathway to Resettlement



MUN Students Approve New Levy to Share Cost of Sponsoring Young Refugees (Canada)

Students at **Memorial University, Newfoundland Canada** have voted overwhelmingly to establish a new program to aid refugees. Through the World University Services Canada (WUSC), the university will be able to sponsor a young refugee seeking post-secondary education each year, costing approximately \$2 a student each semester. The student referendum was spearheaded by the local WUSC branch at Memorial University. The levy will be

What is GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of five organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation and the University of Ottawa. It aims to help other countries set up their own community-based refugee sponsorship programs, strengthening local communities and improving the narrative on refugees in the process.

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