

## GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

### Community Sponsorship Highlighted at the Working Groups on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways



Community sponsorship programs from around the world were highlighted at the Working Groups on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways meeting in Ottawa on February 11-13. This meeting, organized this year by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government of Canada and the Canadian Council for Refugees, provides the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues in the area of resettlement and complementary pathways. Included in the program this year was an expert panel composed of government representatives from the United Kingdom, Germany, Uruguay, and Argentina, and civil society representatives from Canada and Australia, who showcased the importance of partnerships across sectors, to enable community sponsorship in each of their unique contexts. The panelists discussed how these partnerships had helped to shape community sponsorship programs and were key to their success, offering opportunities to share lessons learned. These partnerships can include a wide range of groups, including governments, civil society organizations and private sector.

### North Grenville Hosts International Consultation on Resettlement



Representatives from all over the world were hosted by Open Arms Kemptville, a community sponsorship group from the small rural town of Kemptville in the region of **North Grenville**, Canada. The visit was organized as an activity for visitors taking part in the Working Groups on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways who wished to learn more about how community sponsorship can work outside of urban centres. The group, Open Arms, explained how they had come together and successfully brought a refugee to community late last year. Two representatives from Refugees for Brockville also attended and shared their experiences in bringing over 10 refugee families to the Brockville area.

Sponsors discussed their motivations for getting involved, the challenges and opportunities in welcoming refugees to rural communities, and highlighted the incredible levels of support that small communities can provide that may be more difficult to secure in urban settings. These reflections were strengthened by the inputs from Kemptville's recently resettled refugee, who was able to explain the experience from the perspective of a sponsored refugee.

International visitors were able to see the benefits of rural community sponsorship first hand, and understand how everyone can benefit through community sponsorship.

### "They treat us like family": Cork communities sponsoring refugees to settle in their town

Six groups in Cork, Ireland are undertaking community sponsorship projects to sponsor refugee families to their communities. Three communities are currently preparing to welcome a family through fundraising and securing accommodation. Three others have already welcomed a Syrian refugee family to their communities. Each of the groups involved is supported by a regional support organization. In Cork, these are Avondhu Blackwater Partnership, South and East Cork Area Development, and Nasc and Cork City Partnership.

Carrigtwohill, a community in East Cork, welcomed a Syrian refugee family to their community in the summer. The family is currently learning English and have been working to integrate into the community. One of the members is now the coach of the local soccer team, on which his son plays, while his wife volunteers in the Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre. The family spoke of how friendly the people of their new community are, and community has been enjoying getting to know the family and are very happy with how active they are.

Check out the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!  
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### Rugby club raffle to help Syrian refugee family to move to Forest

The Ringwood and Ellingham Rugby Club in the United Kingdom has partnered with Caritas Portsmouth Diocese to begin its efforts to sponsor a refugee to the Ringwood Community. Though the club's director Mark Johnson admits the process can be difficult he believes that the rugby club is a good fit for sponsorship as the players come from a variety

of backgrounds. "All you have to do is think about your own family in a refugee camp," says Johnson, when asked about how he stays focused. Volunteers have already signed up to help the refugees with various important tasks. Johnson is also using this experience to champion the community sponsorship scheme, and has been reaching out to other rugby clubs to talk about how they can support refugees to resettle.

#### COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN THE NEWS

- The Future of Refugee Resettlement: Made in Europe?



### Parishes help refugees find community and connection

Catholic parishes in Edmonton, Canada, and the surrounding areas have welcomed 660 families over the past five years. Last summer, Catholic Social Services and the Archdiocese of Edmonton hosted a roundtable discussion to reflect on the experiences of these parish sponsorships. The outcomes include a report that details the successes and challenges of resettling over 1500 refugees between 2015 and 2019. A big takeaway from these discussions is that the parish gives families a way of making connections that they may not have otherwise. St. Theresa's Catholic Parish has welcomed five families since 2015, and have relied on the participation of the whole parish to help these families settle, from volunteering to give English language classes, enrolling children in school, and helping them to find employment. These families have worked hard to make their home in and around Edmonton and have worked to integrate themselves into their new country.

#### 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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