

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

AT A GLANCE

UK Community Sponsorship Awards

October 8, 2019--London, United Kingdom

The UK Community Sponsorship Awards will be given out at Canada House, London, in recognition of the vital work sponsors do in welcoming refugee newcomers and building communities. The awards are organized by Sponsor Refugees, the Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees.

The judges for the awards are a group drawn from civil society organizations, academia, business and parliament. On July 31st they met at the House of Commons to decide on a short list of nominees for the awards. They were hosted by Helen Hayes—the Member of Parliament Dulwich and West Norwood—who was also involved in last year's awards. (For an entire list of the judges, click [here](#).) Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor, who is one of the judges and the head of UNHCR UK, said, "We had a very large number of excellent nominations. Very, very difficult job in deciding on winners. I think we had essentially just a very long list of winners."

The shortlisted nominees can be found by clicking [here](#).

Workplace Sponsorship in Action

Danby Appliances

In the Fall of 2015, during a surge in displacement caused by the conflict in Syria, Jim Estill—CEO of Danby Appliances—committed at least CAD\$1.5 million to sponsor 50 Syrian families and to help them settle in the city of Guelph. He tells us about the experience [here](#).

How did your workplace sponsorship begin?

This is a humanitarian crisis. I did not want to grow old and say I stood by and did nothing. One of the phrases I repeat all the time is "Do the Right Thing." It is actually how we try to run Danby Appliances. So I am simply trying to "Do the Right Thing". I wanted to help bring refugees to safety in Canada faster, and settle as many people as possible with the amount of money and resources that I had available.

How did you fundraise for your sponsorship?

We asked the firm management to match the money that we raised, up to \$15,000 CAD, for a total of \$30,000, and they generously agreed. We formed a fundraising committee and organized all kinds of fun activities – a silent auction, a number of high calorie "Monday Fundays" involving pies, samosas, bake and chocolate sales, a dreidel-spinning contest, a concert, and a trivia night. We found that clients of the firm pitched in and started volunteering, and we ended up having over 50 lawyers, staff, clients and others involved. Fundraising activities contributed to good morale at the firm, and word spread about the positive work environment.

How did you engage employees at your workplace?

Business people know how to organize and structure things. They know how to get things done. I always tell people if you can run a company with 800 people, you can run a volunteer organization with 800 people (*cont. page 2*).

NEW GRSI RESOURCE: Coming Soon! Foundations of Community Sponsorship

We are delighted to announce that a new GRSI resource will be launched this fall. *Foundations of Community Sponsorship*, is a set of training materials developed by the GRSI to support organizations in countries developing community-based refugee sponsorship programs.

Organizations supporting sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers will be able to use the *Foundations of Community Sponsorship* package to train and prepare sponsorship group members before and throughout the sponsorship experience. This set of modularized and reflective training resources includes a **training manual** for in-person delivery as well as a complementary **online learning resource**. These materials are universal in applicability but can also be tailored and contextualized by local organizations for different community-based refugee sponsorship programs. Stay tuned for the official release coming soon!

We organized it like a business with a director of health, director of education, director of housing, director of jobs, etc. The director of mentors assigned each family an Arabic-speaking mentor and 4-5 English-speaking mentors. Each mentor group had checklists that included things like: set up a bank account, get a doctor, get a Health Card, etc. And then there are bi-weekly scorecard check-ins to see what is needed; for example, a family might need a Skype tutor or a soccer team for the child, etc.



Jim Estill, CEO of Danby Appliances (center), spearheads his company's refugee sponsorship effort, with more than 800 employees and community members and 100 mentor families volunteering to help settle sponsored families.

What were some key factors in the success of your workplace sponsorship?

Volunteerism – We've built a base of volunteers, including employees, friends, and business associates. We're calling friends and saying, "listen, I need a favour here." The community has stepped up. Families have signed on as mentors, or super friends, to welcome people into their homes for the first two months after they arrive. Enough volunteers have come forward to ensure that each family can be matched with one English-speaking and one Arabic-speaking mentor upon arrival. These "super friends" help refugee newcomers set up bank accounts, acquire official identification, enroll in schools and officially settle into the Canadian system.

Partnerships - We partner with local settlement organizations, as well as organizations like Salvation Army for furniture and clothes, local churches and community centers. Arrangements are in place through this broad range of partnerships to provide apartments, clothing, language instruction, and employment and career counselling.

Mobilizing Business Resources - Businesses have resources that can be mobilized to help refugee newcomers find housing, deliver furniture, learn English and find jobs. At Danby, we have the "Ease into Canada," program that offers each refugee newcomer 90 days of supported employment and English language training at the company.

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN THE NEWS

- Ireland: Kinsale pulls together for refugees
- Spain: Report on refugee sponsorship
- New Zealand: Expanding sponsorship would be a "slam-dunk"
- Countdown to the Global Refugee Forum

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What challenges did you encounter and how did you resolve them?

Timing has been a challenge, as we aren't certain until sometimes just a week or two beforehand, of when a family is going to arrive. In order for families to have a landing pad when they first arrive, I have arranged to have flexible rent of a duplex apartment. This allows us to ensure that we have the time needed to arrange adequate housing for the family. There can also be high demand for English language assessments and classes, which can cause delays. Our English language buddies and teachers have been able to bridge that gap so that refugee newcomers have access to English classes as soon as possible.

What has the impact of workplace sponsorship on you and your company been?

Sponsorship at Danby has been a great, free, team building activity, and the group dynamic among employees is good. The employees and volunteers involved are building leadership and project management skills.

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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