

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

Belgium welcomed its first refugee families through community sponsorship

Fourteen Syrian refugees have recently been welcomed to Belgium. The three families are some of the first refugees welcomed to Belgium since resettlement was suspended in July 2019 and were sponsored through Belgium's new community sponsorship program. Sponsors work with Caritas International to sponsor and support the refugee families as they integrate into their local communities. Fedasil, the government agency responsible for resettlement, is preparing to welcome another ten refugees in November through its resettlement program.

Reset launches the Communities for Refugees Initiative, UK

Reset, the UK's Community Sponsorship Learning Hub, has launched an initiative to increase the number of sponsors in the United Kingdom. Reset's goal is to encourage 5000 UK citizens to sign up to sponsor refugees. Check out [their website](#) to learn more and hear from sponsors and refugees who have participated in the UK's community sponsorship scheme.

UNHCR launches *Ties that Bind*

UNHCR recently released *Ties that Bind*, a photo-driven series highlighting the benefits of community sponsorship for refugees and communities in the United Kingdom. See how community sponsorship forges lasting friendships and allows individuals to be a part of the global solution for refugee resettlement. Check out the full campaign [here](#), and read two of the stories below.

Syrian families find a warm welcome in West Wales

Cardigan, a small village in West Wales, has offered a safe harbour to refugee families through community sponsorship. The UNHCR has been catching up with sponsors and the refugee families who were resettled to Wales since 2017. The Alchik family arrived in Wales in 2017 through the UK's Community Sponsorship scheme. Currently the adults are working on obtaining qualifications for

work and studying English, while the three children have all learned English and Welsh. The family is getting involved in the community through the local soccer club.

The family was sponsored by a group of second time sponsors, who used the lessons learned from this first sponsorship experience to welcome a new family in 2019. The Alhamody family is settling in, obtaining employment and education. According to Ahmad Alhamody, "The people here have been so good. They accepted us and treated us as friends. What I've seen here I see nowhere else. Nothing will make me leave." The family has adapted well to the local community and are enjoying their independence in their new home. Recently the Alhamody family has been giving back to the community during lockdown by cooking Middle Eastern dishes in their new home and distributing them to frontline workers. The Cardigan community is hoping to welcome a third family after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Check out the [GRSI COVID-19 Resource Portal](https://covid19.refugeesponsorship.org/) for more information about GRSI activities, tools and resources during this challenging time

"This has had such a ripple effect": Volunteers help Syrian family rebuild in Liverpool

The Jhayem family arrived in Liverpool in December 2018, through the UK community sponsorship scheme. Volunteers from the Bishop Eton Catholic Parish set up committees to organize each aspect of the sponsorship process, from fundraising to housing, schools to legal advice. While fundraising did present some challenges, generosity came from unexpected sources, including the Penny Lane mosque, which was moved that a Catholic church would help a Muslim family. Finding affordable housing and equipping every room were also challenges the group had to overcome.

Volunteers have helped with daily language lessons for the parents, and helped enroll the children in primary and secondary schools. However, COVID-19 has put significant limitations on day-to-day contact. The group has worked to use technology to keep in touch since in-person contact has been restricted. The sponsors have also been moved by the support

they have received from the resettled family since the pandemic began.

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

Smithers resident honoured with human rights award, Canada



A **Smithers**, Canada resident has been honoured for her work bringing refugees to Canada by MOSAIC, a large Vancouver-based, non-profit immigrant settlement organization. It bestowed Laurie Cooper with its annual Human Rights Award in a virtual ceremony.

Over the past five years Cooper has directly sponsored 21 refugees, and was indirectly involved with sponsoring approximately 300 more people through various other project.

Cooper was first inspired to get involved in community sponsorship during the Syrian crisis in 2015, when she got together with a group of mothers, initially working to raise supplies for refugees living in camps in Greece. In 2016, Cooper began working with sponsors to welcome refugees to Canada. Cooper is currently working with a local sponsorship group to help resettle another family to Canada.

Highlights from the 2020 Vienna Migration Conference and the EU High-Level Interparliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe

The Secretary of State for Migration at Spain's Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration spoke about the Spanish community sponsorship pilot projects and the benefits that Spain has experienced. GRSI Director of Europe also participated in the event. He spoke about the increased momentum around community sponsorship and how the EU could play a leading

role in advocating for community sponsorship. Watch a full recording of the panel [here](#).

GRSI Chair Jennifer Bond spoke at the High-Level Interparliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe. Ms. Bond presented the benefits of community sponsorship, including better refugee integration and positive impacts on communities. There was also a discussion of how community sponsorship can help with resettlement in rural communities and reduce the likelihood of secondary movements. Watch her remarks [here](#).

Check out the new GRSI video "Sponsored Refugee Turned Refugee Sponsor!"



The **new video** features an interview with the first family of refugees sponsored to Ireland in December 2018 through Ireland's Community Sponsorship Programme. The family have since joined with their sponsor group to welcome a new family to Ireland. The family was welcomed to the community of Dunshaughlin, Ireland, from Lebanon. The group in Dunshaughlin was supported throughout their journey by Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre. Read more of this amazing story [here](#).

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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