

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE SPECIAL EDITION

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative Welcomes a New Partner!

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is excited to welcome **The Shapiro Foundation** as the newest partner. Based in Massachusetts, the Shapiro Foundation has long been active in supporting community sponsorship through involvement in initiatives such as the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Fund in Canada, which helped sponsorship groups meet the financial commitments of community sponsorship; the Economic Mobility Pathways Project (EMPP) in Pictou County, Canada; and the Community Sponsorship Catalyst Fund in the United States aimed at expanding local community co-sponsorship programs. The Shapiro Foundation has also supported sponsorship initiatives in the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as projects in refugee employment, education, basic needs, and legal aid in countries such as Bangladesh, Greece, and Israel. Trustee Ed Shapiro has personally co-sponsored refugees in the Boston area, an experience which drives his work.

The UK celebrates community sponsorship with Refugees Still Welcome Assembly 2020



Screenshot credit: Sponsor Refugees (Citizens UK)

The GRSI participated in the UK's Refugees Still Welcome Assembly on December 6, 2020 to celebrate the resettlement of 20,000 refugees in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2020, and to recognize the people and organizations who have made this possible.

UK Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts Chris Philp was joined by Canadian Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marco Mendicino and GRSI chair Jennifer Bond to celebrate community sponsorship. The awards ceremony recognized outstanding refugee contributions to the fight against COVID-19, along with the categories Local Authority of the Year, Lifetime Achievement Award, and Community Group's Outstanding Response to COVID-19. Check out the full list of winners [here!](#)

"Game-changer": £1m pledged to help refugees resettle in the UK

Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative **SPONSOR REFUGEES**

“By providing a £1 million backstop to support lead sponsor organizations, organizations can increase matches.”

Based on my own family's sponsorship experience in the United States as well as my work with private sponsors in Canada, I have become convinced that there are financial tools which can be utilized to support sponsorship groups.

ED SHAPIRO
Trustee, The Shapiro Foundation

UNHCR | Government of Canada | Government of Ontario | OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS | The Gutter Foundation | The Hoover Foundation | UOttawa

At the Refugees Still Welcome Assembly, Ed Shapiro announced the launch of a £1 million Assurance Fund designed to help encourage communities across the UK to resettle hundreds more refugee families. Since the launch of the UK community sponsorship scheme in 2016, community

sponsorship groups have successfully welcomed 449 refugees from Syria and the Middle East. The scheme has also seen great success in welcoming refugees to a variety of communities in the UK, including rural ones. Shapiro's assurance fund will reduce the financial exposure of lead sponsor charities, allowing lead sponsors such as Citizens UK to support a further 200 community sponsorship applications. The Rev. Canon Karen Rooms, Chair of Trustees of Citizens UK, described the fund as a "game-changer". Read *The Guardian's* coverage of the announcement [here](#).

UNHCR marks 70th Anniversary

December 14, 2020 marked the 70th anniversary of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. To mark the occasion, UNHCR Canada has released a [free digital cookbook](#) "Tastes from Home: Recipes from the Refugee Community" featuring recipes and personal stories from refugees. Read more from High Commissioner Filippo Grandi [here](#).

The GRSI applauds sponsorship champions of 2020 and collects hopes for 2021!



Screenshot credit: Bekele Woyecha
On December 9, 2020, the GRSI gathered virtually with over 40 sponsorship champions from around the world to celebrate the global achievements of sponsorship in 2020. The event celebrated the new and renewed programs in Belgium, Spain, and New Zealand. "Sponsorship champions"

from these countries, along with organizations from the United States, presented exciting developments from their countries in 2020. Here's to an even better 2021!

Check out the [Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!](#)

Follow [@theGRSI](#) on Twitter for more updates on [#communitysponsorship](#)

One year after the Global Refugee Forum, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative and the Canadian Permanent Mission in Geneva celebrate community sponsorship



The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative and the Canadian Permanent Mission in Geneva organized a virtual reception to celebrate the progress made in community sponsorship in 2020. Participants from all over the world gathered to celebrate the continued momentum of community sponsorship, and to hear remarks from Canadian Ambassador Leslie Norton; Canadian Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Catrina Tapley; UK Director General of Visas and Immigration Abi Tierney; the Director of Open Society Foundation's International Migration Initiative, Gregory Maniatis, and many more.

This celebration was the culmination of a busy December: the GRSI also held a workshop with Nordic and Baltic municipalities to explore city involvement in community sponsorship and connected with Ashoka Fellows for the online policy workshop "Creating Positive Change in the

Field of Migration through Cross-Sectoral Collaboration”.

The Government of Navarre and the City Council of Tudela collaborate to implement a community sponsorship pilot for refugees from Lebanon

The Government of Navarre in Spain and the Tudela City Council are collaborating on a resettlement reception model similar to the community sponsorship pilots in the Basque Country and the Valencian Community. The Director General of Migration Policies for Navarre, Ruiz de Irizar, remarked that this is an effective way to channel local feelings of solidarity, and that the government is committed to “turning the community into an active agent of reception, accompaniment and inclusion.”

Bridport Refugee Support Campaign hosts event at Bridport Arts Centre



The Bridport Refugee Support Campaign, UK, hosted an event at the local arts centre in December as part of the *Exile: A Mind in Winter* exhibit and project. The team was joined by Hani, a member of a Syrian family who was resettled in Devon under the community sponsorship scheme. Hani and another colleague spoke of their experiences and engaged in conversations about how the initiative can move forward.

Protestant Church that found refuge in Italy's Hills help Syrians do the same



In 2018, the Waldensian community in Piedmont welcomed a refugee family through the Humanitarian Corridor program in Italy. The Waldensian community in Italy were moved to help welcome refugees because their ancestors had found refuge in the area centuries before. Two years on, the family is doing well. Their Italian has improved, and the children are pursuing higher education and developing job skills. Humanitarian Corridors have helped to welcome approximately 2000 refugees to Italy from Syria since 2016. The corridors are tailored to assist vulnerable refugees. After an eligibility assessment leading to their selection, refugees receive an orientation course at their point of departure, so that they know what to expect when they arrive in their new communities. Upon arrival they receive support to help them establish themselves in the community. The level of assistance starts tapering off after six months. According to one of the refugees welcomed to Piedmont, “I feel as though I am improving my life, that I’m learning something new and building a career, and if my family is well, that’s enough for me.”

Five years fly by for Chatham-Kent's first community-sponsored Syrian refugee family (Canada)

Five years ago the community of Chatham-Kent welcomed a Syrian refugee family of seven to the community. The family has thrived since their arrival, with the parents and older children having secured

employment and learned English. The younger children are enjoying school and have joined local sports teams. Minister Mendicino of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada recently marked the fifth anniversary of Operation Syrian Refugee, and celebrated the contributions of communities across Canada.

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

Fundraising efforts to bring refugees to the Comox Valley an ongoing process

The [Church Street Refugee Sponsorship Group](#) is raising funds to bring refugees to the Comox Valley. The group is working with St. Peter's Anglican Church and the Anglican Diocese of BC to welcome three refugees. Many members of the Church Street Refugee Sponsorship Group have helped to sponsor refugees in the past and these experiences have helped shape the group's commitment to sponsoring refugees. To raise the remaining necessary funds, the group is selling handmade goods.

Five years of sponsorship for refugees in Wiesbaden

Germany's ["Be Welcome"](#) sponsorship program in Wiesbaden is celebrating five years of supporting refugee resettlement. The program pairs new arrivals with locals who are able to provide support for early integration and settlement, such as by assisting with apartment hunting and accessing local services. These relationships become friendships and bring lasting fulfillment to all who participate.

Community sponsorship: A Canadian model for European cities?

A growing number of communities in Europe are exploring options to sponsor

refugees by directly resettling them from abroad and integrating them into their localities. Tihomir Sabchev, PhD Candidate, talks to Lawrence Robinson, Senior Policy Coordinator at the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, about the potential and the challenges of turning community sponsorship into reality in different cities, learning from the various models in place in a number of countries.

Their discussion tackles key issues such as the respective roles of local and national governments in this model, the principle of additionality to national resettlement quotas, the merits of naming specific refugees or groups, as well as resources and funding. Listen to the podcast [here](#).

Local refugee group one step closer to welcoming Syrian family to Cowbridge, UK

Community Sponsorship group [Croeso Cowbridge](#) has received consent from the Vale of Glamorgan Council for the group to welcome refugees. Croeso Cowbridge can now apply for approval from the Home Office. The group has been working on its application for about 18 months and has raised the necessary funds to sponsor a refugee family. The group raised the funds for sponsorship through concerts, coffee mornings and individual donations. Croeso Cowbridge is also hoping to recruit more volunteers to help the family once they arrive. The Vale of Glamorgan Council has previously approved sponsors in Penarth and Llanwit Major.

What is GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of six organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation, The Shapiro 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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