

Refugee Committee Update

HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

As most of us already know, much of the work to support a refugee family continues well after the family's arrival. The St. Basil's Refugee Committee is seeking additional volunteers who can help with a variety of tasks, including driving members of the family to and from medical and dental appointments, providing ongoing tutoring, and helping the family explore recreational and cultural opportunities available in Ottawa. This is a great way to get to know the Kreit family and to help make their transition to their new lives in Canada as smooth as possible. The many volunteers who have (continued)



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St. Basil's Welcomes the Kreits

The simple act of going on a family picnic stopped being simple for the Kreit family in the years before they moved to Canada. The bombs that used to indiscriminately fall in their Damascus neighbourhood made walking to the park too risky.

"Before the war, you could, go, but after the war, it was a risk...we felt danger every day," says Rihab, who with her husband Ibrahim and four children spent a recent Sunday afternoon with parishioners at Andrew Hayden Park. The Kreits are the second Syrian refugee family sponsored by St. Basil's, coming three years after the Al Dabeis.

The Kreit family has been living in Canada for about two months now, amid all the adjustments that come with adapting to a new culture and language. But those challenges are modest compared to the threats to their security that they previously had to bear. Thankfully, picnics are once again occasions for family and friends to come together, enjoy a little barbecue and maybe play some pick-up soccer.

The Kreits became part of St. Basil's family on July 12th, two-and-a-half years after the parish agreed to formally sponsor a second Syrian refugee family. The family, which consists of parents Rihab and Ibrahim and their four children; Khalil (25), Sara (23), Loreen (21) and Pierre (17), moved from their temporary lodging in Sandy Hill in early September to a new home in the St. Basil's neighbourhood, where the future begins anew.

Reaching that milestone has been rewarding, but not easy.

Four years ago, family members decided that it was no longer safe to inhabit their home located on the outskirts of Damascus, where they had lived for 15 years. Aside from the threat of falling bombs and the risks inherent in even walking to market, the family was concerned that son Khalil would one day be drafted into the armed forces. (continued...)



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already come forward have enjoyed and been enriched by their experiences. To volunteer or to find out more about how you might help, please contact one of the Refugee Committee's Co-chairs, Terry Tunney or Bill Elliott.

For ways to support financially see sidebar page 3.



A Picnic to Celebrate!

Three years since the arrival of the Al Dabei family and 5 weeks or so for the Kreit family.

(from page 1) "They took people into the army all the time," recalls Rihab. "Some died in a week or two."

In early September of 2014, the family relocated briefly to a neighbour's home and, soon after, a nephew took them across the border to Lebanon. Once there, the Kreits moved into the two-room home of a relative where, for four years, 12 individuals lived together under one roof, with no bathroom.

While some family members picked up bits of work here and there, and the youngest son, Pierre, attended a makeshift school, Rihab and Ibrahim decided they would try to make their future in Canada and applied for refugee status. Ottawa became a natural choice for settlement given that they were already acquainted with some individuals

living here. In 2016, word came that they had been accepted for refugee status.

While the Kreits waited for a departure date, St. Basil's mobilized. The church's decision to offer sponsorship was augmented by a generous donation from Ibrahim's cousin, Michael, whose family lives in the United States. Parishioners got to meet Michael and family when they attended mass here earlier this summer.

"You feel comfortable when you are talking to people here,"

The parish learned only in June that the family would be arriving on July 12th, triggering an urgent search for accommodation. A group of parishioners were on hand to welcome the family to Ottawa when they arrived at the airport.

At this point in their journey, learning English is priority one. Picking up the language will eventually lead to jobs, more schooling and, eventually, careers for the kids. Sara, for example, wants to work as a chef, while Loreen is pondering a future as a beautician. Khalil, hopes to continue his previous career as a hairdresser and has already been picking up shifts at a downtown Ottawa salon. Ibrahim will study English before perhaps returning to his life as an electrician, while, Pierre likes the idea of working in computer science. He has just started Grade 10 at St. Pius.

Asked what they're looking forward to most, Loreen is excited and a little skittish by the prospect of snow. The family also says (continued...)



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Celebration Picnic and BBQ

(from page 2) says transportation is a little easier to navigate in Canada. They also find Canada to be a more open society.

“You feel comfortable when you are talking to people here,” said Sara while attending last month’s picnic.

As if to underscore his sister’s words, 17-year-old Pierre immediately joins a pick-up game of soccer with a few new friends, including members of the Al Dabei family. Soon after, the kids join with everyone else for a hot dog and, for dessert, some homemade baklava. Fitting, it seems.

St. Basil’s is privileged to play a role in helping to create an environment for the success of both families. ■

Donations

We are also seeking donations to help support the Kreit family, as well as St. Basil’s future refugee and humanitarian relief efforts. Our goal is to raise at least \$25,000 and a campaign to do so will be undertaken in October.

You Can Act Now

In the meantime, contributions can be made by placing  money or a cheque payable to St. Basil’s Church in the collection basket indicating on the front of the envelope, or on your cheque, that the donation is for the St. Basil’s Refugee Fund.

About the Refugee Committee

Q: What is the Refugee Committee?

A: The Refugee Committee assists the refugee family sponsored by the Parish. It administers the Refugee Fund and keeps the Parish informed about the family’s progress. It provides guidance to the Social Justice Committee and

Pastoral Team on refugee issues. You can find out more about what is going on at our Parish on our website at stbasilsparish.ca

We are also on Twitter @stbasilsparish



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