



Refugee Committee Update

Issue 02 | January | 2019

January Update on the Kreits Introduction

The Kreit family are the Syrian Refugees Sponsored by St. Basil's that arrived in July 2018.

In the fall of 2018, thanks to the very positive response to our recent fundraising campaign, we have reached our goal of \$25,000 pledged or collected. Our work continues to support the family. For more information about our ongoing efforts and how you might help, look for further updates in the bulletin and on the St. Basil's website or contact the Refugee Committee Co-Chairs.



January Update on the Kreits

The shovel that stands in front of the Kreit family townhouse symbolizes the many new realities that immigrants to Canada experience living in a country so much different than their previous homelands.

The snow and the arrival of winter in Ottawa may be a fun experience for mother Rihab, father Ibrahim, Khalil, Sara, Loreen and Pierre, but snow needs to be shovelled. Add that to Ibrahim's list of to-dos since arriving here six months ago. Along with learning English, setting up a new home, adjusting to a new culture, navigating bus routes and a multitude of other challenges, every member of the family is working hard to succeed in their new surroundings.



On January 12, exactly six months from the day the family arrived in Canada, friends from St. Basil's celebrated this milestone with the Kreit family with a special dinner in their honour.



January Update on the Kreits (continued)

Continue reading for further updates on how our latest refugee family is doing. The Refugee Committee's Co-chairs at St. Basil's are Terry Tunney and Bill Elliott.

Indeed, the Kreits seem to take it all in stride and to be very happy to be in Canada even if everything is so very different from what they were used to in Syria.

Since arriving in Canada last July, the Kreits have continued to meet the many challenges facing them. In a recent discussion, they shared a number of their experiences and observations. When asked how they felt about Canada, Loreen said, "It's a cold country. I know this." But it has been much colder than anticipated and the family is grateful that they now have warm winter coats, hats, mitts and boots.

With respect to food they say they can buy almost everything in Ottawa that they had at home. In fact, they say some things are better here.

Khalil observed that Canadian beef is much better than beef in Syria or Lebanon and thinks the bananas are better here as well. Rihab suggested some food is not so much better or worse, it's just different. For example, Canadian yogurt is a little heavier but very good. Still, you can't beat Syria for figs, just like you can't beat Canada for maple syrup that the family has learned to put on pancakes.

Many things are different in Canada but the family carries on many of their Syrian traditions. They still drink Arabic coffee on a daily basis, as every visitor to their home has learned. Guests are always offered coffee or a special tea called mate (pronounced mat-eh) along with a sweet of some kind. Both the coffee and mate are available in a middle-eastern store where the family shops every few weeks. Most groceries are bought at the local Wal-Mart.

Having talked about food, the family then spoke of their weekly activities and their hopes for the future.

They are keenly aware of the need to learn English and this is their first priority. To that end, all family members are attending school. Seventeen-year-old Pierre goes to St. Pius X. The rest of the family is studying English at St. Nicholas Adult High School. While family members are at various levels of proficiency, each of them has made remarkable progress in English. In addition to their classroom instruction, the family is working with volunteers from St. Basil's who are providing extra support in the form of tutoring on a weekly basis. Their hard work is paying off. When the family was interviewed a few months ago for the purpose of an update in the church bulletin, a language interpretation app was used extensively.

All in all, says Khalil, prospects are bright. "In Canada, it's good for my future."



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January Update on the Kreits (continued)

When we met with the family in the course of preparing this article, we were able to speak with them in English without the need of a translator.

While the family is grateful for the financial support St. Basil's is providing, they know they will have to support themselves in future. Discussions have begun about future employment prospects and Khalil is already working as a hair stylist on a part time basis, Thursdays and Fridays after school and on weekends. His boss is very impressed with Khalil's skills and work efforts and has recently provided Khalil with a car. Khalil is an experienced driver and now has his Ontario driver's licence. In addition to working at the hair salon, Khalil is making use of his car to earn extra money by making pizza deliveries.

The family's social circle is also slowly widening. Khalil says he's made a handful of new friends since arriving in Ottawa, while Pierre has made many more at school.

That may not be surprising, given that Pierre seems to join in all sports at the school, including football and soccer.

As far as hobbies go, Rihab is busy knitting toques and scarves for family members. You can regularly see Ibrahim in the neighbourhood indulging his love of long walks. Ibrahim also enjoys classical music. Loreen likes to watch reruns of the sit-com "Friends" and she and her sister occasionally visit the Ottawa Public Library or the Rideau Centre. Sara loves to cook and does most of the grocery shopping. In December the family enjoyed a Christmas concert at St. Thomas the Apostle Anglican Church featuring the Capital City Chorus.

Volunteers from St. Basil's have made arrangements for both medical and dental care for the family and have been driving members of the family to various appointments.

Winter carries the prospect of new outdoor activities. Khalil is hoping to get up to Mount Tremblant with friends and to try downhill skiing. Other

family members have expressed an interest in learning to skate.

The family maintains contact with friends and family, many of whom were also forced to flee from Syria. A number of them are in Ottawa while others have found themselves in various places around the globe, including Lebanon, Iraq, Holland, Germany and Sweden.

The family celebrated their first Christmas in Canada with a traditional Christmas dinner featuring the first turkey Rihab ever cooked. More recently, on January 12, exactly six months from the day the family arrived in Canada, friends from St. Basil's celebrated this milestone with the Kreit family with a special dinner in their honour.

Based on their first six months in Canada, the family is optimistic about their new life here. All in all, says Khalil, prospects are bright. "In Canada, it's good for my future."