

The Kanata, Stittsville Refugee Sponsorship Group (KSRSG) Report for 2016

The Kanata/Stittsville Refugee Sponsorship Group (KSRSG) was formed in 1996. Our primary purpose is to sponsor refugees from around the globe and provide them with a safe haven and the opportunity for a new life in Canada. In this past year Trinity Presbyterian Church in Kanata has decided to join our group and are very pleased to have them involved. Our eight member churches include Kanata, Stittsville and Glen Cairn United, St. John's South March, St. Thomas, and St. Paul's Anglican and St. Andrew's and Trinity Presbyterian Churches. For those whom we sponsor, we provide financial, social, emotional and logistical support for their first year in Canada. Our funding comes from the annual pledges from member churches and from occasional fundraising activities. 2016 has been a very busy year for us. Here are some of the areas upon which we have focused our efforts.

1. **Syrian Refugees:** The terrible plight of those fleeing war and oppression in Syria has continues to receive a great deal of attention in Canada and around the world. In March we submitted a sponsorship application for a single female from Syria living in Lebanon, and another sponsorship for a single male from Syria living in Jordan. We received confirmation from Canadian immigration officials that both sponsorship applications had been approved. In late June, we were very pleased that the single male from Jordan arrived. His family members here in Ottawa are providing the majority of support and we are assisting as needed. He now has his own accommodation and has found employment. We are very pleased at how well he is adjusting to life in Canada. We are none-the-less disappointed that we have not received word as to when the single female in Lebanon will be arriving. We hope to hear news before the end of 2016. She also has family members here in Ottawa who will be providing assistance, while our group will be providing the majority of financial support. We are also in the final stages of completing a refugee sponsorship application for a family of four from Syria who are also in Lebanon. We hope to have the application submitted by the end of 2016 and hope that the family will arrive sometime in the coming year. This family will also be receiving a significant amount of support from other family members living here in Ottawa. The KSRSG also provided financial support to the Centretown Emergency Food Centre to assist them in responding to the needs of the many Syrian refugees who are living in downtown Ottawa. In February we held a fundraising concert with the band FOAM at the Glen restaurant and raised almost \$1,600 to assist Syrian refugees. We thank everyone who attended.

2. **Rwandan Siblings:** This past year we continued to provide financial support to one of four siblings living in Rwanda who were orphaned during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. We have been committed to support all of them until they have each obtained a post-secondary education. Three of the four siblings have reached a point in their education such that we are no longer providing them with financial support. We will continue to support the fourth sibling for another year or two, when it is expected that his post-secondary education will be completed.

3. **Families from Afghanistan:** For almost four years we have been working on sponsoring two families from Afghanistan who are presently living in Tajikistan who are related to each other, and who have family members living here in Ottawa. We were pleased that these two families of 12 members in total also arrived here in June of 2016. They are receiving considerable support from their family members here in Ottawa, and from our group. With the support of other members of the Afghan community here in Ottawa we completed and submitted a sponsorship application in 2015 for a family from Afghanistan who are presently living in Dubai. We have not had a response from Canadian immigration officials regarding the status of their application. As are also completing a sponsorship application for another family from Afghanistan who is living in Tajikistan which we hope to submit in 2017. They are unrelated to the families mentioned above, but they too have family members here in Ottawa who will provide the majority of support to them for the duration of their sponsorship. At the request of our Sponsorship Agreement Holder, the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, we completed a refugee sponsorship application for a mother and daughter from Afghanistan living in Pakistan. Their lives have been threatened due to what is often termed an “honour killing” situation. They have family here in Ottawa who will provide the majority of support when they arrive.
4. **Families from Iran:** We are working with family members here in Ottawa to complete a refugee sponsorship application for a family from Iran who is living in Turkey. We had hoped to have this application submitted in 2016, but now hope to do so in 2017. We also provided financial assistance to St. Thomas the Apostle Anglican Church in Alta Vista in their sponsorship of a mother and two children from Iran, who arrived here in 2016.
5. **Ride for Refuge:** We participated in this annual bicycle fundraising event held in Kanata in October, from which we received almost \$5,000. We thank John Toft and Peter Bishop of Glen Cairn United for all of his assistance.
6. **Museum of History Project:** Michael Petrou, a journalist who has previously worked for Maclean’s as a correspondent from locations around the globe, is now working on contract with the Canadian Museum of History on a project to document and display information related to the Canadian response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Michael met with members of our committee and collected information regarding our work with refugees from Syria, which will be a part of the collections and possible display at the museum.

In 2017 we will continue to assist the families and monitor the progress of the sponsorship applications mentioned above. We do not yet know if there will be any spaces available for us to submit the two applications we are seeking to complete, or to submit others. We receive requests on almost a weekly basis from those seeking to be sponsored as refugees, but we are only able to assist those for whom we have spots allocated through our Sponsorship Agreement Holder, and for which we have the financial resources.

We wish to thank everyone who contributes to and supports the work of the KSRSG including those who have attended KSRSG meetings on behalf of our member churches.