

Refugee Support Network - Wolfville Area Report for WAICC Annual Meeting

During the Fall of 2015, meetings were held at Wolfville Baptist Church to discuss the possibility of sponsoring a Syrian refugee family. There was a large and positive response from the community. A decision was made to work under the auspices of WAICC.

A Coordinating committee of co-chairs Judith Tod and John Murimboh, secretary Heather McGregor, and treasurer Keith Irving, with Contact Persons for 9 different areas of the work was established, and the name Refugee Support Network - Wolfville Area was chosen. The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches was selected as our Sponsorship Agreement Holder. The decision was made to sponsor a family of 6. In December, we were offered funding by a foundation if we would be the sponsors of a second family. There was unanimous agreement by about 50 people in attendance.

A great deal of work goes into finding and furnishing an apartment, setting up finances, clothing, documents, liaison with schools, finding and training English tutors. We are blessed with an exceptional group of volunteers from church and community.

On January 21, 2016 our application for the Tahina family was submitted; on January 28th we were notified that arrival would be February 3rd. On January 31, over 40 people attended a meeting to fine tune plans and volunteer for specific tasks.

The day of arrival was certainly a highlight for us. It is hard to imagine the mixed emotions the family must have felt, in addition to exhaustion. Settlement begins the next day with signing a lease, tenant insurance, bank accounts and Post Office box. During the following weeks there are many documents to be filed with Immigration, school tours, and English classes. The family have worked so hard, are very grateful, and are striving for independence. A very meaningful Welcome to Wolfville event was held at Wolfville Baptist Church on March 19th, with thanks to the women of the church for providing the reception.

On March 16th we voted to submit an application for the Ali family: parents and 3 young children with a baby expected in the Fall. Once again the teams began preparing an apartment and putting in place the requirements for settlement. We are awaiting their arrival, hopefully in early May.

We are very grateful for the support of WAICC, especially those involved in keeping the accounts and depositing donations; Wolfville Rotary Club for a dance that raised \$6500; generous donations from Mud Creek Rotary and the Harrison McCain Foundation; the support of churches; and overwhelming support from the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Tod