

# *Refugee Sponsorship Project*

## *Four months.....*

It's been a short four months since our refugee family arrived from their temporary home in Lebanon. So much has happened since they arrived, not the least of which was their first experience with our Ottawa winter which never seemed to end!

On January 30, Toni and Victoria were introduced to tobogganing. Here they are with Father Daryold, students and staff from All Saints High School.



Now that the snow is gone and the temperatures are more reasonable, the family is anxious to see more of the Ottawa area and all it has to offer. If you can, invite them to join you on an excursion to any of the wonderful sites in Ottawa.

## *Making Progress*

When the Refugee Sponsorship Project Working Group met on March 2, everyone quickly realized the tremendous amount of effort which has been, and continues to be, expended in dealing with the settlement needs of our family.

The **Education and Language Training Team** worked to get Toni assessed and registered in the English Catholic school system. He is attending St. Pius High School in Grade 11. His parents were registered in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, which are conveniently held at the Westgate Mall. They are committed and enthusiastic students making good progress. Through their class they have developed friendships with other Syrian families. Victoria originally attended a high level ESL class at Westgate, but has advanced to studies through St. Nicholas Adult High School in Carlington. She is working to update her Grade 12 credits for entrance into university.

The **Health Team** continues to put in many hours assisting with the medical, dental and vision issues which have been identified. Luckily, the family receives support from the Carlington Community Health Centre (CCHC) right next door to the church. Thanks also goes to Carling Dental for their acceptance of the family as patients and performing initial assessments pro bono.

## ***Amazing Generosity***

When this sponsorship project launched in June 2015, our generous parishioners and friends pledged over \$49,000 for the support of the family. As of mid-April, over \$35,000 of the pledged money has been received and families continue to fulfill their promises. In addition, another \$10,100 has been donated by parishioners, organizations, visitors and schools. In total, donations have surpassed the \$45,000 mark. *The financial statement is displayed on the bulletin board.*

When some members of the family expressed a desire to work part-time, the **Employment and Community Resources Teams** stepped in to help. Family members have met with a resettlement counsellor and are registered with Service Ontario for employment assistance. They are preparing resumes and learning about the job market. If you or someone in your network could offer employment, please contact the parish office. The areas of employment interest are posted on the Project's bulletin board.

Dealing with the government bureaucracies at all three levels has consumed considerable time. Income tax returns were filed, which activated some benefit program payments to assist the family in meeting its financial obligations. Steps were taken to: obtain coverage for Toni under the Healthy Smiles Ontario program; arrange a discounted membership at the Carlingwood Y; obtain support from the City of Ottawa's Hand In Hand program; investigate subsidies available from the CCHC; apply for assistance through the Jumpstart program; and get info on a free art program (for Victoria).