

# Refugee Sponsorship Project

The long wait is finally over!



This tired, but very happy group gathered in front of the OTTAWA sign at the Macdonald-Cartier International Airport on New Year's Eve. This was after five stressful days in transit for our refugee family and a day-long vigil at the airport for the welcoming committee. Even news that the luggage was missing could not dampen the high spirits.

## Already feeling at home

"Frankly, it's hard to believe that the family has been here for barely more than a week," said David Darwin, Coordinator of the Refugee Sponsorship Project Working Group. "There has been so much to do during the first days, yet when you visit the apartment, they are all settled in. It feels like they've lived here for months."

On New Year's Day, Father Daryold introduced and welcomed them at the 10:30 a.m. Mass where the entire congregation joined in a special blessing. The family is of the Roman Catholic rite and they are eager to become members of our parish. Please feel free to greet them and spend a few minutes chatting.

During the first full week after arriving, Refugee Sponsorship Project Working Group members supported the family to complete several requirements:

- Signing a lease for the apartment on Leaside Avenue
- Shopping for groceries
- Setting up a bank account

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St. Elizabeth of the  
Visitation Roman  
Catholic Church

## Parish Update

January 9, 2016

### Pastor's Message

*"The safe arrival of our Syrian refugee family would not have been possible without generous support of parishioners, the local businesses community and other contributors, All Saints and Notre Dame Catholic High Schools, and our Refugee Sponsorship Working Group.*

*However, I truly believe that the prayers offered by each of you over many months were just as critical in helping this family reach the end of its four-year journey.*

*Thank you for welcoming Nají, Georgette, Victoria and Toni into our parish community. Please continue to keep them in your prayers."*

*... "Father Daryold*

- Getting internet ordered for the apartment
- Researching options, then purchasing a mobile communications package
- Visiting the downtown Service Ontario offices to get OHIP cards
- Purchasing OC Transpo Presto cards
- Reviewing a suggested household budget
- Arranging appointments with Community Resources and Health Agencies
- Completing applications for benefits and services
- Getting Toni registered for high school
- Providing advice and recommendations on a variety of needs
- Supporting the family with English/Arabic translation.  
(We are very fortunate to have parishioner Bilal Alnajjar take on this role.)

We were able to “hit-the-ground-running” on this list because of the excellent preparation by each Working Group Team that already had housing, furnishings and household goods in place, cleaned and operating; clothing, bedding and other needs donated; agencies researched and contacted, financing planned and the post-arrival *To Do List* in place. Our local business community also responded with donations of goods and services or huge discounts for items that needed to be purchased.

In the next couple of weeks there will be visits to the Catholic Centre for Immigration and the Ottawa Library, plus appointments for Language Skills Evaluation and Health Assessments.

### How you can assist!

THE best thing you can do is to build a personal rapport. Now that they are here, we want to make these new Canadians Canadians *really* feel at home. Please take the first step to socialize, go for coffee, or just chat to ask about their homeland, their interests and challenges. You can introduce them to Canada's Capital and some of the surrounding region. Over the coming months you might invite them to special events, performances, or some of the festivals for which Ottawa is so famous. Consider opportunities like Winterlude, Maple Syrup season tours, Tulip Festival, Busker's Festival, and *Canada Day on the Hill*, of course!

Right now, we would really appreciate someone to help the family learn about the transit system and how to use it: How to read schedules and plan out routes, the formal and informal rules for riding a bus – where to board, how to pay, where to sit, expected courtesies for special needs passengers, how to exit safely, etc.

Please consider helping out and call the Parish Office at (613) 725-2242 or email us c/o [st.elizabethparish@rogers.com](mailto:st.elizabethparish@rogers.com).



Only a few minutes after landing, the family spots St. Elizabeth's welcoming group among the crowd of people waiting.



St. Elizabeth of the Visitation  
Roman Catholic Church

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