

Dear OCRA Friends and Supporters!

I hope this email finds everybody well, and that you are starting to enjoy the onset of winter - the best of the season to everyone! OCRA has had another busy year welcoming, settling and raising funds for the sponsorship of close relatives of our settled OCRA families. Our sponsored families are living in very difficult circumstances in Lebanon, where delays have been experienced due to civil unrest, Jordan and Ethiopia. Here is our report for 2019 (along with some terrific links we hope you will enjoy) and our annual request for donations (Skip to the heading "**Fundraising Request**"). We hope that you will consider a donation. Remember that donations of \$100 or more before December 31 to First United Church Ottawa, delivered to Pat Wilson at 164 Glebe Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 2C5, will qualify for charitable tax receipts issued by First United and allow you to reduce your taxes!)

OCRA's Settled Families

Here in Ottawa, our settled families are on the go! A baby has been born, kids are entering and in high school and middle school, little ones have started kindergarten. We have three students at Algonquin, one in the Police Foundations course, one in English for Academic Purposes, and one in the Algonquin High School Equivalency. Adults are working driving for Uber/ Lyft, in an automotive shop training for certification as an auto-mechanic, property management, and a teenager part-time in the restaurant business. But best of all, many of our families have now applied for or received their Canadian citizenship! One of our fellows even got 20/20 on the Citizenship Exam! I have enclosed some pictures from the Citizenship Ceremonies, which are always very moving, especially the enthusiastic way "Oh Canada!" is sung near the end!

Our Eritrean family is nearing the end of our one year sponsorship period. They have come an amazingly long way since their arrival last December. The parents have mastered the LRT/ buses and are at English School where the (now) 2 year old loves the daycare. The eldest girl is in Grade 9 at Woodroffe and is writing simple essays in English after only 8 months of schooling. The middle, talkative girl is enjoying Kindergarten in both English and French. We are working hard to bring the family's 16 year old son to Canada. His story about escaping from Eritrea to a refugee camp in Ethiopia is attached below. It makes harrowing reading. We are hopeful of getting him to Canada within the next few weeks/ months.

Two Arrivals on June 25, 2019

It was very exciting on June 25, 2019 when two of our sponsored OCRA 2.0 families arrived at the Ottawa Airport. A total of 11 close relatives of the Agha and Al Abdullah families came from Jordan. Their arrival occasioned much joy, many tears of happiness and huge relief for our settled folks and the new arrivals alike. Here is a video OCRA made that we hope you will enjoy: [Welcoming New Refugees to Canada](#)

The new families are settling well into life in Ottawa. Two girls are at Glebe Collegiate, adults are at English School (with daycare spots for the little ones!), and all are learning English very fast! G1 licences have been obtained by three of the new arrivals, with hopes of getting G2 / G early this year. Health and dental visits are underway. Settlement of big families like this is much easier when they have close

relatives to help them - you can see the smiles and happiness of both new arrivals and welcoming families at each visit. There is starting to be excited talk for plans in Canada. It has been a real privilege to re-unite these families.

Sponsorship Applications

We have four sponsorship applications in progress: a grandmother in Lebanon, the 16 year old son of our Eritrean family in a camp in Ethiopia, a single mom with three children living in Jordan, and a young mom and dad with two young daughters who are in very difficult circumstances in Lebanon. We are hopeful that our grandmother in Lebanon and our young Eritrean boy in Ethiopia will arrive early in 2020. We are working to advance the case of the young family in Lebanon so that they can complete the processing of their case and arrive in Canada next year as well. The application for the single mom and family in Jordan is waiting for a space allocation to be submitted to the government. This family might arrive later next year if their application can be sent to the government in early 2020.

Volunteers Needed!

We would love to have volunteers to help settle the families who have arrived and the families that are expected to come. If you would like to help with specific tasks like driving, or help newcomers to learn English, help find housing, or help obtain in-kind donations of clothing, you would be more than welcome! Just send us an email and we will slot you in! Any and all help would be appreciated.

Fundraising Request

First, a sincere THANK YOU to those of you who have already contributed this year. Your contributions have enabled us to fund the sponsorship of the 16 year old son of our Eritrean family, who remains in a refugee camp in Ethiopia and to almost complete the funding of our Syrian family now in Jordan.

OCRA 2.0 had a busy year fundraising for the the four families we are hoping to re-unite. Christine McAllister and gang worked incredibly hard to organize and put on our 2019 Opening Doors event, where we were privileged to be able to show the Lucy Tulugarjuk film about an Inuk teen welcoming a Syrian refugee to her world ([Tia and Piujuk](#)). We had a great crowd, a terrific silent auction and raised over \$12,000 after expenses! We also raised over \$2500 in the pouring rain at the Great Glebe Garage Sale, where our intrepid volunteers at the food station outdid themselves!

This year the government increased the requirement for financial support significantly. We have been able to fully fund the two families who arrived this year, but need to raise more funds for the sponsorship of the young family in Lebanon and the single mom and family in Jordan. In both cases the host countries are increasingly unable to keep, and are threatening to repatriate Syrian refugees. In both cases return to Syria by the young males in these families is likely to result in arrest for failure to perform military service or wrongful suspicion of desertion or opposition. Both are living in extremely vulnerable circumstances. Any amounts that you can contribute will help OCRA bring these two families to join their relatives in Canada, and save them from the fear, uncertainty and hopelessness they now endure.

We hope you will consider a donation as part of your charitable giving this year. **Donations \$100 and over will qualify for a charitable tax receipt if they are provided by cheque or the equivalent to First United Church Ottawa and delivered to Pat Wilson at 164 Glebe Avenue, Ottawa K1S 2C5, before December 30. Please put OCRA in the description line.**

You can also contribute online at <http://refugeeaction.ca/donate/> . Please note that we cannot issue tax receipts for on-line contributions.

We wish each of you the very best of the season, a happy and healthy time over the holidays with loved ones, and a Happy and Healthy 2020!

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