



WHAT IS RECEPTION HOUSE & HOW DO WE HELP?

Reception House Waterloo Region is a community based organization that provides government assisted refugees who settle in the Waterloo Region a very warm welcome, as well as an array of programs and services. Our programs and services are aimed at assisting refugees as they settle in Canada so that they may lead healthy and productive lives in their new community.



A WORD FROM MIRA MALIDZANOVIC

I am pleased to present our Fall 2014 Newsletter!

While we celebrated many accomplishments over the past year, we also faced some challenges. The number of Government Assisted Refugees has been significantly reduced by Citizenship & Immigration Canada and will continue to decline in the next year. This has resulted in funding cuts and staffing changes for Reception House. In 2013, Canada received record breaking low numbers of refugees, in fact the lowest number within the last 4 decades. This has affected all settlement-related service delivery and many cuts were made to programs across the sector. Despite these challenges, we remained committed to our vision, where our clients always come first and we are very proud to be a part of their journey and their settlement process.

Each year we set our sights to raise more money to support our mission to improve the lives of Government Assisted Refugees. We would like to thank family, friends and individuals for their support, as well as the foundation grants which help us maintain the high quality of services and provide extra assistance and programs for our clients.

Over the past 2 years Reception House's Board of Directors spent considerable time developing and improving a new set of Governance Procedures. In the spring, Reception House board members and management initiated the process of an organizational review in order to begin working on the strategic plan, which included reviewing and reaffirming our programs and services, addressing risk management issues, identifying human resource needs, and possible new partnerships.

It was a very busy year, so we invite you to read through the Fall 2014 Newsletter which highlights the many activities, celebrations and good times that marked this past year.

Mira Malidzanovic

Program Director, Reception House

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IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & HOW TO FIT IT IN!

Physical activity is important not only for your physical health, but also your mental health. The benefits of exercise are endless! When we spend 20 to 30 minutes a day doing some form of physical activity, we are benefiting our bodies in many different ways, such as:

- Preventing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, arthritis, and falls
- Stimulating various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed, aiding in the prevention of depression and anxiety

5 EASY WAYS TO SNEAK EXERCISE INTO YOUR DAY

- 1. Take the stairs.** Everyone is bound to face a set of stairs throughout their day.
- 2. Go for a walk after dinner.** This will also aid in digestion.
- 3. Practice yoga.** Yoga is a great way to exercise without feeling like you are exercising. It's relaxing and helps build overall physical strength.
- 4. Focus on your posture.** Sitting with proper posture can assist in developing core strength and avoiding back issues.
- 5. Join the Reception House Riders for the Ride for Refuge.** The Ride for Refuge is always a lot of fun. Start training now for next year's ride.

COMMON CHALLENGES BEING FACED AT RECEPTION HOUSE

HOUSING Finding appropriate accommodations for our clients can be one of the most challenging aspects of our Resettlement Assistance Program. Four of the most prevalent reasons for this are:

Large families. With houses and apartments getting smaller, it makes finding an appropriately sized home very difficult. The price of a full-sized home is usually outside of the budget for our clients and therefore they are forced to share bedrooms and reside in very small quarters until they get settled. The largest units available in apartment buildings are 3 bedrooms, and those are often very hard to come by.

Single persons. When a person arrives independently, they generally will have to share a living space with someone they do not know, as renting an apartment alone will be too expensive.

Discrimination. Many landlords will immediately decline a family when they hear that they are “new to the country” or a “refugee”. Having no credit history or a guarantor is another detrimental factor.

Increased housing prices. With housing prices increasing 2-5% on a yearly basis, finding safe and appropriate housing for our clients becomes very difficult. While the vacancy rate for apartments in the area is high, many of these are found in “luxury” buildings, which are out of reach for our clients due to budget constraints.

Language barriers. Many clients speak little or no English, which makes it very challenging to communicate with landlords and service providers.

INTERPRETATION Reception House will often face challenges when finding interpretation for the diverse language base of our clients. Service providers, particularly in the health service industry, are unaware of the importance of providing interpretation. Interpretation services allow our clients to access main stream services in the most efficient way possible. In hospitals, the issue seems to be one of systemic nature. Management is aware of the existence of telephone interpretation, but frontline staff are either hesitant to use it due to logistic issues or are unaware of its existence. Government assisted refugees are told to bring a friend or family member that speaks English to help with interpretation, but this is not always an option.

We are always looking for volunteers to enhance the language services available to our clients. If interested, please contact us at Reception House.



RECEPTION HOUSE WORKSHOPS

Better Together is a workshop that focuses on creating friendships for women who are in need of a support system when they arrive in Canada. This program began 2 years ago and has been a great success. Sessions run for 10 weeks at a time, with participants coming together once a week. The workshop is offered when there is a large enough group of women who speak the same language, enabling them to communicate and develop friendships. Topics covered include cooking, hygiene, safety, and community services; they are presented in friendly atmosphere of an informal gathering.

Reception House partners with **Mosaic Family Counselling** to provide the **Well Being** sessions. This workshop offers families the support they need. Every Friday, counsellors from Mosaic come to Reception House to meet a family and provide counselling services. These services are very well received by our clients and we thank Mosaic for this amazing partnership.

INTRODUCING OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEER: *Mary Mueller*



Mary has been volunteering with Reception House for the past 8 years. She works in the Public Health sector and has true passion for assisting newcomers to Canada. Her passion and drive for the newcomer community is what led her to us and we are so happy to have her as a part of our Reception House family. Mary’s connections with the Kitchener Soccer Club coupled with her enthusiasm and passion for the sport, have allowed her to become an amazing lead to the **Soccer for All** program. Mary claims she is not a “soccer superstar”, but she has the enthusiasm and energy to make this program an amazing one for our youth.

Mary finds that working with refugees helps her grow as a person. It makes her appreciate everything that Canada and the Waterloo Region have to offer to not only Canadian citizens, but also newcomers to the community. Mary is honoured by the amount of stories that have been shared with her by Reception House clients. Mary enjoys learning about different cultures and faiths, while also getting to know the clients of Reception House as people and friends.

Reception House would like to thank Mary from the bottom of our hearts for her ongoing support. **Soccer for All** would not be the program it is today without you. Your dedication is an inspiration to us all and a constant reminder of why we do what we do here at Reception House.



What's been happening & what's coming up at Reception House?

CELEBRATING WORLD REFUGEE DAY IN VICTORIA PARK

On June 27th Reception House celebrated **World Refugee Day** in Victoria Park. World Refugee Day is dedicated to spreading awareness of the wide variety of situations that refugees are currently facing throughout the world.

During our celebration, we had a fashion show where participants were able to showcase multicultural garments and fashion styles from all over the world. Countries included Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Myanmar, South Sudan, Iran and North Sudan. It was most definitely a colourful event!



We celebrated with music, dance and delicious food. We were happy to have 'Space of Hope' provide musical entertainment throughout our day. There was a potluck lunch where we enjoyed many delicious dishes, including Somali rice with raisins and carrot, homemade hummus, falafel, babaganoush, peeni krompir sa siroh, buna, zigni and injera, and ful medames (**a delicious fava bean dish – see page 4 for the recipe**).

We would like to thank everyone who participated in, performed at, supported and attended our World Refugee Day celebration. As a result of your support, the event was an incredible success and we were very appreciative of the hundreds that joined us for this fantastic celebration!

SOCCER FOR ALL HAVING FUN & STAYING ACTIVE

The **Soccer for All** program has been a definite success! 70 youth clients between the ages of 5 – 23 joined the program. Participants were able to improve their soccer skills, learn about Canadian culture and make new friends in the community. **Soccer for All** will be starting up again in October and we are hoping to have even more youth join us this year.

Soccer for All has been such a successful program as a result of generosity of many people and partners who have offered their facilities, talents and resources. We would like to thank the City of Kitchener, the Kitchener Soccer Club, Trinity United Church, Waterloo Region Police Service, KW Community Foundation, and the Mennonite Credit and Saving Union. We would also like to thank our many amazing and enthusiastic coaches who are members of the refugee community in Kitchener Waterloo.



If you are interested in helping with the program, we are always in need of funds for shoes, shorts, water bottles, bus tickets, and rental for sport facilities. We also welcome new soccer coaches who are interested in helping newcomer youth develop their soccer skills. A special thanks to our volunteers, Mary Mueller and Khattab Raheem, who work very hard to make the program a possibility and a success!

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF RECEPTION HOUSE

After reading through the highlights of all the exciting events that have happened this past year and the amazing things occurring at Reception House on a daily basis, we are sure you are probably wondering how **YOU** can become a contributing member?

Reception House values the dynamism, knowledge, and experience of our Kitchener-Waterloo community members. As a non-profit organization, we are able to thrive as a result of your participation and input. We welcome you to share your energy, expertise, and passion for helping others by becoming a member of Reception House.

We would like to welcome community members to get in touch with us to see how they can become valuable and contributing members of our Reception House family.

How do you become a member? Membership with Reception House costs \$5/year. If you are interested in becoming a member of Reception House, please visit our website at www.kwrcentre.ca for a membership form or contact Mira Malidzanovic at 519-743-2113 or mira@kwrcentre.ca.



RIDE FOR REFUGE: ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL RIDE!

On October 4th, the Reception House Riders oiled up their bicycles, dusted off their helmets and hit the open road for the **11th Annual Ride for Refuge**. The Ride for Refuge benefits displaced, vulnerable and exploited individuals throughout the world while raising awareness of the wide variety of challenges refugees face on an international scale. They had their biggest ride yet for Waterloo Region this year, with the participation of over 1,100 riders and 50 charities from throughout the area.

We had a team of 23 staff, board members and supporters ride together on October 4th. We had sun, rain and wind, but most of all we had a lot of fun! As we finished the ride off, we were provided with some delicious sausages, mac & cheese, and chocolate chip cookies. It was the perfect meal after a long ride.

The Reception House Riders raised over \$8000. A special thanks to our top two fundraisers, Lyle and John, who both raised over \$1000! The donations raised will be used at Reception House to benefit government assisted refugees as they begin to rebuild their lives here in Canada.

We would like to thank all of the riders & supporters of this year's RIDE FOR REFUGE!



The Reception House Riders before the Ride for Refuge on Saturday, October 4th



Reception House clients supporting Yallah 23

What's Cooking at Reception House? *Featuring a delicious & healthy Middle Eastern fava bean dish*

Ingredients:

- 1 can of fava beans
- 1 tbsp of tahini
- 1 tomato
- 1 quarter of a cucumber
- 1 tsp of cumin powder
- 3 tbsps of sesame oil
- ¼ tsp of salt

Directions:

1. Open can of beans, drain the water. Add ¼ cup of water and leave it to boil for approximately 10-15 minutes
2. When beans are fully boiled, crush them up a little and add a ¼ tsp of sea salt (more can be added to suit your taste) and 1 tbsp of tahini
3. Dice up fresh tomatoes and cucumber for garnish
4. Remove the beans from the stove. Add the tomatoes, cucumber, cumin and oil and slowly mix.
5. Shred cheese of your choice on top.

MUNA'S SUCCESS STORY

On average, we have over 200 people come through our doors at Reception House every year. We would like to highlight the job search success that our past client, Muna, experienced this past year. Muna arrived in Canada in January 2012. When she arrived, she had a positive outlook on her job search process and felt that she would not run into any major challenges. The process did not prove to be as easy as Muna thought it would be. She searched for many months without hearing any positive feedback. She ended up utilizing the job search services provided by local organizations such as the **YMCA, The Mosaic Centre, Focus for Ethnic Women, The Working Centre and The Multicultural Centre**. After a very challenging 18 months, Muna scored a 5 month contract job in her field. Before the end of the contract, Muna was hired on permanent, full-time basis. Muna told us that although the process was very stressful, she managed to stay determined and focused as a result of the guidance and support she received from both Reception House and The Mosaic Centre. We would like to congratulate Muna on her new job in Canada and we wish her all the best in the future!

SUPPORTING YALLAH 23

The picture on the bottom left is a group of Reception House clients and staff who are supporting **Yallah 23**. Yallah 23 is an organization based in Berlin, Germany which has originated to spread awareness of the very restrictive treatment of refugees that is currently taking place throughout Germany. Yallah 23 is looking for a "simple and fair solution for all: no more complicated asylum procedures, no more deportations to conflict regions, and no more bad compromises with politicians. We do not want to be 'refugees' anymore, isolated from the rest of population. We want to be neighbours, friends and colleagues."

A special thanks to all of our funders & supporters



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