



Vision 2021

Shining Brighter: Shining the Light Inwards Year 3/2021

The year April 2020 to March 2021 marked the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. As was the case all over our world, Reception House was forced to adapt and innovate as the year progressed. Through it all, we continued to be the region's most comprehensive refugee serving agency serving the most vulnerable group of newcomers - government assisted refugees (GARs).

We delivered programs and services via online instruction as well as limited in-person delivery. Because of our gracious and passionate staff, energetic and compassionate volunteers and motivated supporters and donors, we were able to make a real difference and to reduce the pain of isolation that our newcomer clients felt as the pandemic added to the challenges more typically experienced. And while the pandemic restrictions reduced the pace and number of arrivals, those same restrictions magnified and intensified the needs of those already in our care.

Even in such challenging times, Reception House made great strides in areas such as program innovation with the launch of the Digital Engagement Project and the very successful Working Together Program, as well as in local advocacy for affordable housing and increased primary healthcare. We built internal capacity with investments in technology and in local partnerships.

And in this, our third and final year in our Strategic Plan, we have begun to review our impact and to apply comprehensive evaluation to our programs and services. With quantifiable data and impact stories from the last three years, we begin the visioning and planning of a new strategic plan which will guide Reception House Waterloo Region into 2022 and beyond.

And so it is with deep appreciation that we thank you: staff, volunteers, donors and all those passionate about our mission. We hope you continue to walk with our organization and those who have arrived from around the world to become part of a thriving and welcoming Waterloo region community.

-Chris Stanley, Board Chair and Lynne Griffiths-Fulton, Interim CEO



Reception House
Waterloo Region

From the Past to the Future

Aspiring to Grow in Reach and Impact

Many years before Reception House became an official resettlement program contractor for the government of Canada, the organization established its roots as a place of safety and new beginnings for refugees looking for a permanent home and a healthy quality of life.

In 1972, 101 David street, previously a nursing home, was purchased for \$40,000 by a group comprised of 3 couples with 3 babies between them, and 3 individuals, hoping to establish a Christian community - they called it House Church. In the spring of 1973, the group moved in once the renovations were done, and since two women in the group were very pregnant, neighbours mistakenly thought the house was going to be a home for unwed mothers. Instead, it was a home that welcomed newcomer friends - refugees from around the world who were looking for a stable and prosperous future.

Times have changed over the past years, and so has our community. Reception House continues as a place of safe refuge, offering the hundreds that arrive every year in Waterloo region, opportunity to reach their potential and to call our community home.

In 2021, while still in the grips of a global pandemic, we are adapting to the evolving needs of our clients as well as to the sheer growth in the numbers of arrivals. As our world grapples with conflicts, climate change and other contributing factors, the numbers will continue to increase. Our organization requires a review of all resources to meet the growing needs. Our team is inspired and energized by the resilience, courage and optimism of our newcomer friends.

As we move forward, we hold tight those original principles of kindness, compassion, and equity that embodied the founders of Reception House, and we forge ahead to greet and welcome the next group that seeks to knock on our door and asks to be part of our community.



Pictured: Glennis and Mark Yantzi, one of the couples responsible starting Reception House and House Church.

A Year at A Glance

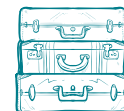
The refugee journey starts with a Warm Welcome in Waterloo Region:



Between April 2020-March 2021, we received and welcomed 110 new arrivals.



During the year, we provided support to 585 government-assisted refugees in Waterloo Region.



We provided 16 families with Welcome Kits to help make their 14-day quarantine more comfortable.



All 16 families were provided a loaner laptop and received digital literacy support. This support helps families to be able to access remote, virtual services, like resettlement support, education and healthcare during the pandemic.



All 16 families were provided with starter kits when they moved into their own homes. Starter kits include essential supplies like linens, dishes, kitchen supplies, backpacks and school supplies and more.



In a normal year, we hold community dinners regularly. Due to the pandemic, we held no community dinners. Our newcomer friends missed this opportunity to build community.

Vision 2021 Pillars



Strengthening and Evaluating Our Programs and Services

Reception House clients arrive with multiple dimensions of vulnerability due to a variety of factors such as, lack of language skills, poor health and disability, age, mental health issues, and poverty and trauma due to previous unstable and protracted living conditions. These factors or needs are all interconnected and need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The physical isolation demanded by the pandemic intensified many of the mental and physical stressors that our clients faced.

A standardized empowerment-oriented and trauma-informed care approach is our approach to delivering the continuum of care that includes different levels of support and interventions within our clients' first year of arrival in Canada. We have several key partnerships with other local community organizations such as Carizon - for mental health support services, and Community Justice Initiatives - our partner in our New Canadian Youth Connections program.

In order to better support our clients in these trying circumstances, Reception House staff took on extra training via webinars and on-line learning to aid in the delivery of services as well as some digital learning support to clients.

Last year we offered the following programs:

- Resettlement Assistance Program,
- Community Support Services,
- Working Together Program,
- Youth,
- Community Connections - Family Partnership Program, English Outreach, Friendly Call.



Several members of the Homework Club. Image taken prior to Covid-19.



We provided orientations to life in Canada for people from all over the world including: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Myanmar, Somalia, Syria and Turkey.



287 needs assessments were performed, related to health, social support and community connections, money and finances, housing, education, life skills, employment, language skills, Canadian law and justice, overview of Canada, and becoming a Canadian citizen.



330 family clients and 376 individuals received orientation sessions. These sessions are driven by a needs assessment that is conducted on each and every client we serve.



Support Staff, Board and Volunteer Development

One of the ways we sought to support to our staff and our Board was through a collaboration with the Social Venture Partners of Waterloo Region. As the 2019 SVP Investee, we have during this past year, continued to grow through the support provided by SVP partners. Specifically, SVP was instrumental in providing our team with the professional tools required to review strategy, to improve team communication, and to ensure a more efficient and effective organization. With tips on how to structure our areas of work and how to organize and tackle the varying workplans and responsibilities, the support from SVP brought substantive improvements to our senior leadership teams.

As with all aspects of our lives, Covid-19 required staff and board at Reception House to conduct all our work online. This shift was abrupt and quickly accelerated our organization's pace for upgrading our software and overall digital capabilities. The organization completed the Digital Blueprint Program of the Recovery Activation Program (RAP), which helped staff to adapt and deliver digital client supports, ensuring that we have streamlined processes supported by technology. This led to a further investment in IT systems with a switch to a cloud-based platform.

Reception House's general IT capacity grew, our online security was improved, and most staff were able to fulfill their duties whilst working from home.



Working from home became our new normal this year. Our IT capacity and use of cloud based software allowed our staff to work from home.



Strengthen Partnerships and Our Local Role

As we focus on strengthening community and corporate partnerships, Reception House Waterloo Region continues to see more local businesses interested in our work of supporting government-assisted refugees.

As part of the Working Together Project (WTP), the employment team has been working closely with several local corporations. As a gap was identified between refugees and employers, the Working Together Project was designed to bridge the gap, which provides gainful employment experience in the Canadian workplace, an experience most refugees have yet to encounter. WTP is proving that inclusion in the labour market is a key driver of successful refugee settlement and delivering a sense of belonging.

After the second year, we have noticed a difference in local employers and our clients who are employed with these local employers. Many employees now report an increase level of their English CLB levels and their confidence. Having a job, earning a pay cheque and providing for their family has helped many of our clients being to feel settled in Canada. Multiple clients now report feeling proud to be employed and proud to take a more active role in participating in activities that we may take for granted, like purchasing groceries, visiting with neighbours and attending school events.

We continued our partnership with Conestoga College. As part of the WTP, Conestoga College provided virtual language training during the pandemic. This training assisted with improving clients' English language skills.

Reception House and partner, Immigration Partnership, delivering Region's Recognition Certificates and the Immigration Partnership Letters of Appreciation to our partner employers and to Conestoga College.



Client Success Story

WTP Participants Receive Welding Training

As part of the Working Together Program, 14 employees were placed with Accumetal Manufacturing in Stratford. From the group of 14, 7 employees were selected for a 6 week training program in welding which includes trade math, blueprint reading and basic MIG welding instruction.

Accumetal's hope is to spark (pun intended) their interest in pursuing a skilled trade career in welding. All 7 employees selected for this 6 week training program are Working Together Program participants.

WTP Prepares Newcomers for Working in Canada

- Based on our WTP clients' feedback, after
- 6 months 70% felt they were prepared,
 - 12 months 82% felt they were prepared,
 - 18 months 100% felt that they were more prepared for working in Canada.

Employer Feedback

"If this initiative came to an end, I would hire someone dedicated to providing settlement and employment support to the newcomers that work here. That's how valuable this program has been to our company."

- Janet Lehman, Director of Human Resources at JD Sweid Foods



Diversify Our Core Funding

In addition to receiving government funding, Reception House has been fortunate to receive funding from our community: kind and caring individual supporters as well as some of our local community foundations, including the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation, Fairmount Foundation, Astley Family Foundation, Mersynergy, Wallenstein Feed Charitable Foundation and more.

To these foundations and their teams, we are extremely grateful. These funds help us to meet the needs of our clients that are not covered by government funding. There are several aspects of social integration and general welcoming activities and even some health care requirements that are not part of the budget that the government asks Reception House to steward. But with the generosity of local foundations as well as the wonderfully supportive Waterloo region community, we have been able to provide additional supports to our newest neighbours and to offer them as warm a welcome as possible in these days of Covid-19.

We recognize the need to diversify our funding in order to mitigate risks and ensure continuous strong financial support for our clients. To that end, Reception House formed a Revenue Diversification Committee that helps to steer and optimize fundraising efforts. These efforts, that include prudent and strategic targeting of grant applications, has led to a decrease in our dependency on federal funds (from 81.4% in 2020 to 75.6% in 2021). We look forward to continue the expansion of this improved range of fund sources.

Digital Engagement Project

Can you imagine navigating the pandemic without reliable WIFI? Trying to attend school and submit assignments without a computer? Or sharing one device among five or more people in your household? Many of the refugees we serve are in this position, doing the best they can in an increasingly digital world without access to technology or the digital literacy skills to thrive.

With the support of the Hallman Foundation's "Support the Pivot Fund" we are embarking on a new project to ensure that refugees arriving in our community have access to, and can make the best use of digital tools and technologies to improve their lives.

Digital literacy skills are necessary to access education, health care services and even resettlement support. We thank the Hallman Foundation for their support as we embarking on providing digital literacy skills to our newcomer friends.



Artwork credit: Michelle Kosak

Client Success Story

Volunteering with the Homework Club

Our Homework Club pairs motivated volunteers with students who might need some help with homework. Jim Flannigan has been a volunteer with Reception House for several years. He always goes above and beyond as he helps students with their homework.



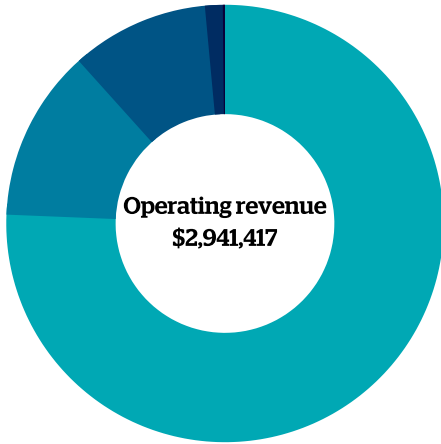
From top left: Jim, Marlie and Ahlam

Despite Covid-19's impact this year, Jim has continued to support members of the homework club, often outside of regular hours and remotely. His dedication and commitment to supporting homework club members help motivate many students to stick with their studies and learn what they can. In return, all the students request to be paired with Jim.

Thank you to Jim for your hard work, dedication and commitment to helping students with their homework. We believe you are one of the reasons many of our students are eager to continue their studies through high school and post-secondary levels.

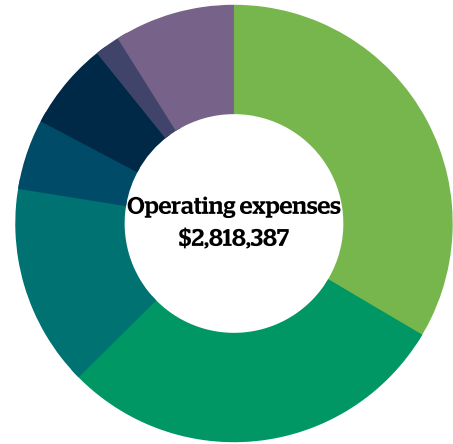
Financials

Where our support comes from



- 75.66% Federal Funding
- 12.69% Foundations/Grants/Corporate Sponsorships
- 10.18% Donations
- 1.31% Investment income and other
- 0.16% Rental Revenue

Where your support goes



- 33.49% Housing, Lifeskills, Initial integrations
- 29.09% Client Support Services
- 14.95% Working Together Program
- 8.93% Legal, Governance
- 6.47% Special Events, Fundraising
- 5.21% Youth
- 1.86% Health and Wellbeing

Thank you to our Funders and Donors for Supporting Our Mission



KW House Church
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 Blenheim Ecumencial House Church
 Kindred Credit Union
 Raymond James Canada Foundation
 Shantz Mennonite Church
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