



Reception House
Waterloo Region



Annual Report

2021-2022



Reception House
Waterloo Region

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Reflections on a Year of Transition

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April 2021 – March 2022 was a year of transition, growth, and resilience. During the past year, we saw an almost 400% increase in the number of people arriving at Reception House, largely due to the federal government’s Afghan Resettlement initiative that was announced in August 2021. Almost overnight, Reception House had to scale up operations, whilst also navigating leadership changes and the COVID-19 pandemic that continued to place additional stress on staff and clients. We want to recognize the commitment of staff who worked diligently under very difficult circumstances, across multiple locations to ensure that everyone received the support that they needed during this incredibly challenging time. Under the leadership of Lynne Griffiths-Fulton, our interim CEO, and through the hard work and dedication of our incredible staff team, Reception House was able to adapt and respond to this crisis.

No one chooses to flee their home. People are often separated from family members, experience significant trauma, and/or arrive with serious health conditions. Reception House staff worked, and continue to work, diligently to ensure that the people we serve receive their Permanent Residency, OHIP, SIN, financial assistance, and other government documents; health assessments and referrals; employment and language assessments and support; and are connected to any other supports that they may require. Meanwhile, the current housing crisis in our community has kept staff busy supporting people in temporary accommodation, looking for new landlords, and trying to secure housing for people making this community their new home.

As we reflect on the past year, we also look forward to the future. During the upcoming year, Reception House will be embarking on a strategic planning process to set a vision and direction for the future. As part of this process, we will be reviewing our program evaluations and speaking with staff, volunteers, clients, and community members to ensure that Reception House Waterloo Region continues to be responsive to the needs of the people that we serve, financially sustainable, and able to nimbly adapt to changes in government policy.

We want to acknowledge the support of IRCC, our funders, donors, partners, community members, board members, and staff, all of whom are integral to the success of Reception House. Thank you for your ongoing support and for helping to ensure that Government Assisted Refugees in Waterloo Region feel welcomed, supported, and connected.

Babur Mawladin
CEO

Chris Stanley
President



Nurturing the Next Generation

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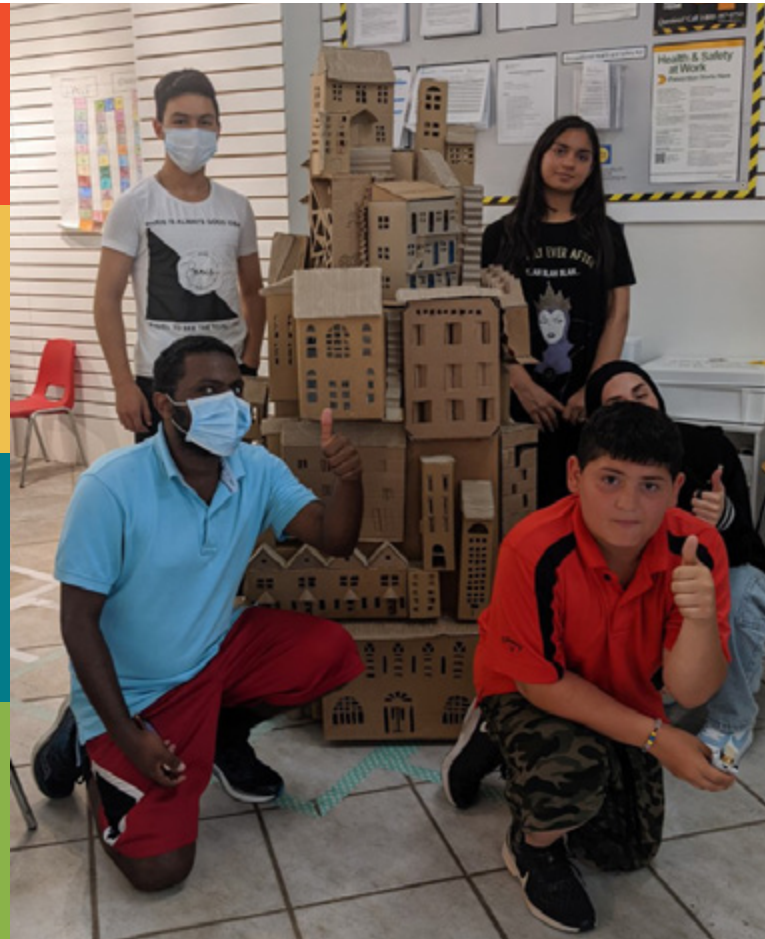
Children and youth programs at Reception House offer opportunities for learning and building social connections through recreation, art, music, homework support, and field trips. We are thankful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a grant that supported our New Canadian Youth Connections program, which we offered in partnership with Community Justice Initiatives. Due to the large number of children staying in temporary accommodations, we also began to offer daytime recreation opportunities for younger children and their families, including regular trips to Waterloo Park, games, craft activities, and a toy lending library. Through these programs, children and youth improved their academic performance, developed ideas for future career opportunities, forged positive social connections with peers and youth program leaders, improved their English language skills, increased their understanding of Canadian culture and life skills, and got to know their new community.

Quotes from Reception House Youth

“NCYC Homework Club helped me achieve my goals in getting high marks.”

“I know more about Canadian culture because of NCYC.”

“NCYC has expanded my social circle.”



Art with Pamela

“Youth newcomers arrive at Reception House after a long journey. We want to provide a space where they can feel comfortable and welcome using art as a tool of introduction and integration into Canadian culture. We experiment with diverse art techniques and materials. At the same time, we introduce English vocabulary and the youth start asking questions about going to school, Canadian culture, jobs, and voluntary opportunities.”

Pamela Rojas



“Children in temporary accommodation can’t be going to school, [sometimes] for months... We provide programming during the day so kids can get out of the house, meet friends, practice English you know, burn off some energy, [and] try new things.”

Andreea - Reception House Staff, Children's Programming



“My favourite memory was when I did graduation with high marks and I had a high chance to go to medical school.”

Reception House Youth

Housing Issues

Housing has reached a crisis point across Canada and Waterloo Region is no exception. Over the past few years, we have seen a significant increase in rental rates, housing competition, and discrimination against newcomers in the rental market. In addition to outright discrimination, many standard rental applications and new rental screening apps, such as Nabourly, have (un)intended discriminatory impacts against newcomers as a whole, automatically screening out applicants without Canadian credit history or Canadian landlord references. It is not uncommon for our clients to face as many as a dozen rental application rejections.



Most families we serve are only able to cover the cost of rent by relying heavily on income from the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). However, this benefit can take up to 3 months to process, leaving families hesitant to secure housing until the benefits arrive. This can result in extended stays in temporary accommodation, which also places additional strain on the capacity of Reception House, its staff, and resources. For families that do move before their CCB is processed, many face food insecurity or housing instability as they struggle to pay rent in those first few months; in some cases leading to breakdowns in the relationships between newcomers and their landlords.

To raise awareness of these issues and encourage landlords to welcome newcomer tenants, Reception House is developing a Housing Awareness campaign that will run later this Fall.

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“Houses have been hard to find here. We applied to many apartments, but we were rejected. I want a home to relax.”

Reception House Youth

Partnerships for Health

Many refugees arrive in our community with significant health issues. Reception House works closely with our healthcare sector to ensure that they have access to quality and timely healthcare. Some of the initiatives that we've partnered on over the past year include:

Primary Healthcare Partnerships

Over the past few years, many of our clients have been fortunate to receive their initial health care through the Refugee Health Clinic at the Centre for Family Medicine. Unfortunately, due to funding gaps, they no longer have the capacity to absorb the number of refugees coming to our community. Together we continue to advocate for more family doctors and encourage doctors who have openings to accept refugee patients. However, many doctors are reluctant to accept patients due to significant health issues and/or a lack of translation services. Without a family doctor, some refugees are forced to rely on our already overburdened emergency rooms.

Refugee Health Working Group

As a member of KW4 (Kitchener, Waterloo, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich) Ontario Health Team and a co-lead of the Refugee Health Working Group, we were able to ensure that refugee health issues were a priority for action in the first year of the work plan to support the revisioning of our local healthcare system. This has also led the members to sign a statement committing to provide interpretation in all health care settings.

Mobile Vaccination Bus

With the ongoing pandemic, access to COVID-19 vaccines became critical for refugees arriving in our community. Thanks to a partnership between Reception House, Region of Waterloo, Grand River Transit, and the Grand River Hospital Pinebush vaccination team, we were able to coordinate 8 mobile bus clinics and provide 176 COVID-19 vaccines to those who needed them. A multi-disciplinary staff team addressed the concerns of clients and worked creatively to tackle challenging questions and validate overseas records to ensure that people were able to access their vaccine passports from Ontario Health.

Discretionary Health Fund

Many people arrive in our community with serious health conditions that require treatments and supports that are not covered by either provincial insurance or the Interim Federal Health Program (insurance provided to refugees during their first year in Canada). Reception House maintains a donor-supported discretionary health fund to provide for these uncovered health needs. Last year, over \$50,000 went to support refugees in need of dental work, prescriptions, assistive devices, and mental health support, among others.

Staff Recognition

The success of Reception House is built upon the incredible dedication and hard work of our amazing staff. We want to take this opportunity to recognize the efforts and expertise of those staff who have made a lasting commitment to Reception House.

Fifteen Years or More of Service



Amine Gebremariam
Community Navigator



Lynne Griffiths-Fulton
Director, Programs



Bashir Shahbaz
Manager, Employment



Wilma Laku
Case Manager



James Swaka
Case Manager, Team Lead



Zakim Tokhy
Housing Coordinator, Team Lead

Ten Years or More of Service



Genet Habte
Life Skills Facilitator



Nadra Tamourt
Case Manager



Ramla Mohamed Aweys
Administrative Assistant -
Employment



Amal Ali Abdurahman
Case Manager

Welcome Babur Mawladin



In April 2022, Reception House welcomed our new CEO, Babur Mawladin. As CEO, Babur will lead our dedicated staff and volunteers, continue building strong relationships with our local partners, fortify our standing within the community, and develop a strategic vision to forge a path for the organization's future growth and prosperity. Please join us in welcoming Babur to Reception House!



Ways to support our mission:

Volunteer We offer many meaningful volunteer opportunities, for a variety of interests and skills. Help create a welcoming community and build relationships that support newcomers to integrate into Waterloo Region. Visit receptionhouse.ca/get-involved/ for details.

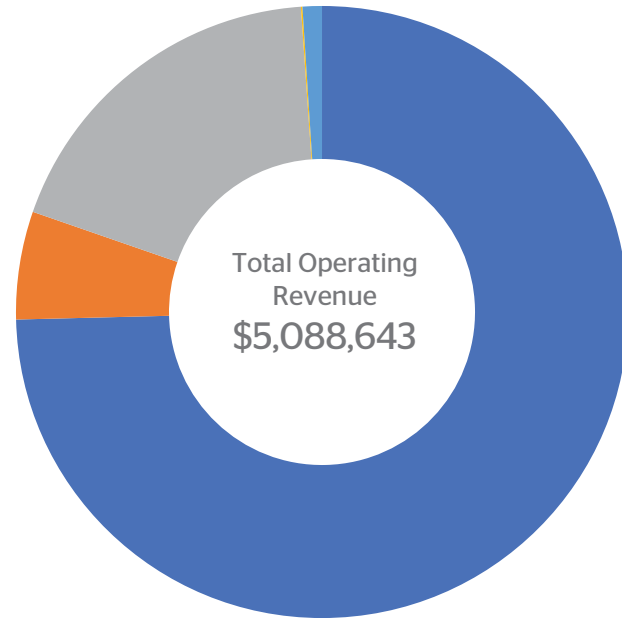
Donate Your financial support strengthens our service delivery. Consider including Reception House in your annual giving by making an one-time donation, or becoming a monthly donor. Contact heather@receptionhouse.ca for more information.

Advocate We need better supports for refugees, newcomers and all people living on low-income. Join the conversation online or in your community. Follow us on social media for call-outs and invitations to local events.

Offer a Roof If you are a landlord or have a space to rent or share, connect with our housing team. Refugees face much discrimination in an already competitive rental market. Join our list of housing allies by contacting housing@receptionhouse.ca

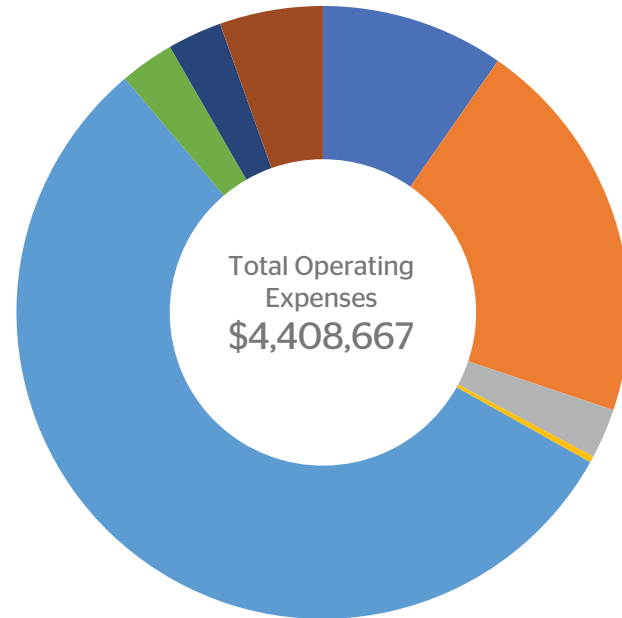
Financial Snapshot

Where our support comes from



- 74.60% ■ Federal Funding
- 18.59% ■ Donations
- 5.70% ■ Grants
- 1.02% ■ Special Events
- 0.08% ■ Other revenue

Where your support goes



- 55.69% ■ Housing, Life Skills, Initial Integration
- 20.49% ■ Client Support Services
- 9.67% ■ Operations and Governance
- 5.45% ■ Other Programs
- 2.87% ■ Employment Services
- 2.86% ■ Children and Youth Programs
- 2.63% ■ Communications, Fundraising and Special Events
- 0.34% ■ Health and Wellbeing

Funders and Donors

Thank you to our major funders and donors who contributed \$5,000 or more during the last year.



- Astley Family Foundation
- Cotton Mendes Investments Inc.
- K-W House Church
- Creekside Church
- HIP 741 King Inc.
- Jackman Construction Ltd
- Oakes Foundation
- Shantz Mennonite Church
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada
- Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation
- Trinity United Church
- 3 Anonymous Individual Donations
- Trinity United Church
- United Way Waterloo Region Communities
- 3 Anonymous Individual Donations

Thank you also to the 524 other organizations and individuals who made donations to support the work of Reception House, your contributions are greatly appreciated!

You Make a Difference!

We are deeply grateful to our incredible funders, donors, community partners and supporters. Together we make Waterloo Region a more welcoming place for refugees.



“Thank you for the life skill orientation, we learned many things: how to be safe and secure when moving and living in our own house and how to reach Police, Fire and Medical while there are emergency cases.”



“Thank you so much for these items donated to us. It now feels that we are in a journey of starting a new home, especially for me in my kitchen”



“I am writing this email to thank you and your colleagues who provided support for me during my stay in the hotel. The team was super supportive and provided me with all the needed documents on time. During my stay, they managed the food distribution process well. Everyone was receiving enough food with a different variety of food each day.”



“I have made some friends at the program...I see the program like a bridge, the program helped us transition to a new environment and new phase in our life.”



“I am fully satisfied with the services which have been provided by the receptionist house and I sincerely appreciate it.”



“Homework club is my favorite online activity.”