

Responding to the Global Call for Refugee Support

Syria and Beyond



Reception House
Waterloo Region

Annual Report 2015-16

2

The cover features Reception House Waterloo Region's new logo. Our designers described their creative process in this way:

Our challenge was to create a new logo that reflected the theme of growth, community, and new beginnings. In the design, we wanted to create a positive welcoming feel. The icon is a small maple tree with sprouting branches to represent stages growth, family and new beginnings by growing roots in the community. The new Canadian sprout is embraced by a comforting, protective circle representing harmony and unity which opens to the typographical treatment of Reception House.

The colour we chose was a blue, allowing for less cultural or religious boundaries. It is a natural colour seen in the sky and water, adding a calming, welcoming feel to the design. Blue also is found on 53% of all national flags and is generally regarded as the world's favourite colour.

Credits

Map of Syria on page 8 - Single Color by FreeVectorMaps.com

Our Mission

Reception House Waterloo Region is a community-based organization that provides a warm welcome to government-assisted refugees through a number of programs and services designed to make their new life in Canada a success.

These programs and services assist refugees throughout their settlement and integration process, allowing them to lead healthy and productive lives in their new community.

Our Vision

It's our vision that all refugees to the Waterloo Region have a successful settlement experience, fully integrate into the Waterloo region, and become an accepted and welcomed member of the community.

Table of Contents

Joint message from the Executive Director and the Board President	4
The Syrian Crisis	6
Responding to the Challenge	7
In Their Own Words (Client stories)	8
Beyond Syria	8
By the Numbers	9
Responding through Partnerships and Innovation	10
Waterloo Region Syrian Preparedness Plan	11
All Day Health Clinics	12
Reception House and The DH	12
Community Awareness and Engagement	14
Family Partnership Program	16
Volunteer Programs	17
Financial Statement Summary	18
Thank You to Our Partners, Collaborators and Funders	20
Board of Directors, Management Team and Staff	22

A Place For New Beginnings

Vision

“It’s our vision that all refugees to the Waterloo Region have a successful settlement experience, fully integrate into the Waterloo region, and become an accepted and welcomed member of the community.”

2015/2016 was a watershed year for Reception House Waterloo Region. It started with the long-time Executive Director Mira Malidzanovic’s retirement, an Interim Executive Director, Albert Lobe put in place to manage the many changes the organization was undergoing, while dealing with the largest ever influx of refugees to the region. During the Winter of 2015 and early 2016, working primarily out of a hotel, staff and volunteers performed the herculean task of settling over 800 Syrian refugees.

Focusing on cementing the long and valued history of Reception House and increasing the community’s awareness of the work done for almost thirty years, the Board of Directors and leadership staff continue to work on ensuring that the course set for the future is strong and built on a solid foundation.

The Board and the Executive Director have undertaken to strengthen the infrastructure of the organization by working to renew our program spaces, marketing materials and our Human Resource Policies and practices. The plan is to continue on this road, focusing on ensuring we have the right tools to provide the kind of services that refugees expect; the funders demand and that is consistent with the history of the organization. Reception House Waterloo Region is known and will continue to be known as an organization that delivers services geared to assisting, encouraging and supporting refugees in their integration and adaptation process, to ensure their success in Canadian Society.

We thank our staff and Board colleagues, volunteers and funders for their support during the many changes we have made and the changes yet to come. We look forward to the community's continued support of the organization and we look to the Board and its new members as they strengthen their governance work. We continue to welcome even more refugees to the region in 2016 and beyond, as we respond to the Canadian Government's promise to settle more refugees in the coming years.

Carl Cadogan
Executive Director

John Kavanagh
Board Chair





The Syrian Crisis

Responding to the Challenge

The Syrian crisis has produced the world's largest refugee population since WWII. In the face of one of the greatest humanitarian disasters the world has ever known, Canada's response was to increase its international commitment to provide resettlement for refugees taking in over 35,000 Syrians and 7,500 from other refugee producing countries in 2016.

Reception House was on the front-line of these efforts as the only local agency that provides initial resettlement services to GARs - including temporary housing supports, orientation to Canada, and referrals to necessary services in the community.

Reception House served 967 individual clients during this fiscal year, almost four times our normal annual target. With very little time to prepare for the increased numbers of people arriving, staff had to respond and meet the situation head on. With compassion and dedication, they proved to be up to the task!

We have increased our capacity to carry out our traditional programs and services while facilitating new creative partnerships to meet the needs of clients they are serving.

Reception house now employs over forty individuals, from a variety of backgrounds, speaking over thirty different languages, with the majority in front-line service delivery positions.

The crisis also gave the Region of Waterloo a chance to respond, from external service providers, settlement based organizations and volunteers, the community as a whole stepped up and responded to the challenge with kindness and understanding.

While unprecedented numbers led to significant challenges, it also led to opportunities for new partnerships and a deeper community understanding of the difficulties that face our immigrant population.

As we move forward we look to build upon the cooperative relationships that we've developed to ensure a brighter future for all of our clients.

In Their Own Words

Abdulahman* arrived in Canada on March 9, 2016. At 20 years old he had been studying English Literature in Syria prior to fleeing his homeland. “It was a different English, England English, not Canadian English,” he explains. On arriving in Canada Abdulrahman began to take stock of his future.

His initial language assessment came back high but not quite high enough for him to apply for the program he was most interested in, Police Foundations. “I’ve been going to English speaking circles at Queen Street Commons and taking classes at St. Louis. I expect it to take a year for me to become fluent.”

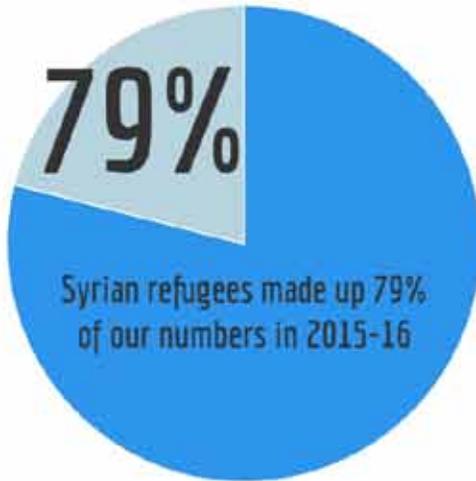
In the meantime he has applied for work in the food industry. “It will give me the opportunity to work on my language and I can make some money.” For Abdulrahman, Police Foundations remains his focus. “Canada is my second home. I want to help keep people safe. That’s my future.”

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of our clients.

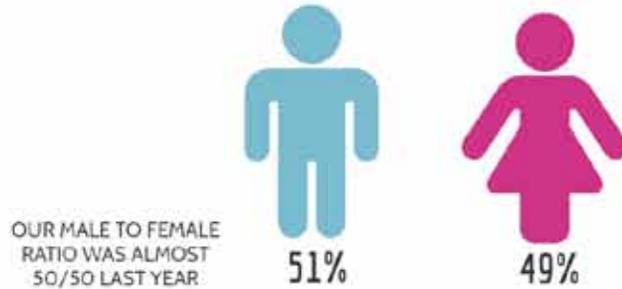
Beyond Syria

While a significant amount of media and community attention this past year was dedicated to the Syrian refugee crisis, Reception House also continued to serve refugees from around the world. Conflicts, political instability and ethnic violence continue to displace individuals with no regard for borders. Our ability to respond to clients from a wide variety of countries is essential to our mission. Reception House staff are able to speak over twenty different languages fluently and able to offer services to all refugees upon their arrival.

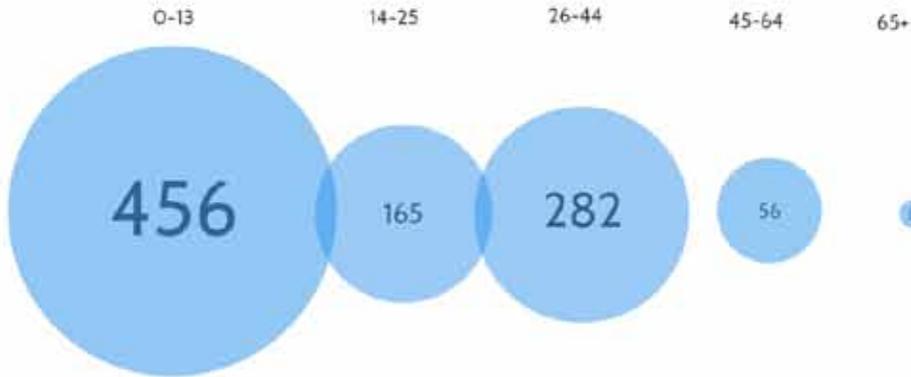
Other countries that Reception House received refugees from include Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Liberia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Vietnam. Over twenty percent of our total number of refugees in 2015/16 were non-Syrian.



By the Numbers



AGES OF OUR CLIENTS UPON ARRIVAL IN CANADA



Responding through Partnerships and Innovation

The Waterloo Region Syrian Refugee Preparedness Plan

In response to the Syrian crisis, Waterloo Region tailored their Preparedness plan to refugee resettlement. Most often used during emergency situations when the need for communication and collaboration is high, the Preparedness plan became a vital tool for organizations and individuals involved in the resettlement of Syrians.

The Chair of the Municipal Resettlement Control Group, Mike Murray worked diligently in conjunction with the mayors and the Regional Chair to express local needs to Federal and Provincial immigration ministers. Those needs were informed by local working tables attended by service providers from throughout Waterloo Region. Working tables included transportation, health and mental health, education, housing, children's services, volunteers, language support and employment.

With a seat at all of the tables, Reception House was a part of many vital conversations and interagency collaborations. The working tables gave the community an opportunity to

form a better understanding of the services provided by agencies across the Region. This understanding allowed agencies to expedite referrals, cooperate on solutions to pressing needs and avoid the duplication of services.

The legacy of this interagency dialog has been the willingness between service providers to continue to work closely on newcomer resettlement.



All-day Health Clinics

In early March three all-day health clinics were organized with support from Reception House, Centre for Family Medicine, Local Health Integration Network, LifeLabs, PharmaShoppe, private practice primary care physicians, interpreters from the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre and transportation provided by Grand River Transit. During these clinics clients passed through a general intake, screening, and were given medications and referrals to specialists as needed.

As a result of these collaborations, a process for referring all families to ongoing primary care physicians was developed in conjunction with Community Care Access Centre. Our clients are now referred to a local family doctor for continuing health care after moving out of temporary accommodation with logistical support provided by Reception House.

These opportunities to collaborate as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis allowed the resettlement community to solidify ongoing relationships and foster new solutions to ongoing issues.



The DH Food and Lodging

In December a small hotel and restaurant, The DH Food and Lodging in St. Jacobs, sat briefly empty. The business had closed at the end of November and the owners of the building were looking to transition the space. At the same time Reception House was about to experience the largest surge of clients in its history.

Reception House approached The DH about the opportunity to use the space as a temporary home for Syrian refugees. Very quickly a deal was reached between the two organizations that allowed Reception House to use the space for free.

In a pre-Christmas meeting, volunteer Tom Bileski received a list of other volunteers who had agreed to staff The DH during its time as a home for refugees. Further volunteers were sought and the community of St. Jacobs stepped up very quickly. In total fifty-six volunteers kept the building staffed from 8 AM until midnight every day of the week.

When the Syrian refugees arrived the language barrier was an early challenge it was not a

road block to friendships. Through communal meals and community activities a kinship between families and volunteers formed. Early on Shawarma Plus helped out by readying the kitchen and within a few days full meals were being served. In the words of one volunteer, “They were some of the best meals of my life, not only because of the food on the table but because of the people around it.”

Initially there were no pre-set ideas of what activities and interactions were going to happen on a daily basis. However, before long a routine quickly formed. Volunteers made sure to maintain the dignity of their guests by respecting the space they needed to feel comfortable. A “no cameras” policy allowed for a higher degree of privacy.

Rosemary Regan was a key volunteer who helped push the space forward. Her time and dedication to the project was significant. There was an overriding sense of positivity about the project and the experience brought all of those involved closer together. “It was a blessing to be a part of,” remarked Tom Bileski. “The warm welcome and professionalism of the Reception House staff were much appreciated.”

Community Awareness and Engagement

As a community-based service agency, Reception House has engaged with many service providers this year to ensure that people are able to access necessary supports.

Through the Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region's Syrian Response structure, Reception House has engaged a multitude of service providers from a variety of sectors. We were able to provide supports to people while in temporary accommodation - immunization; children's dental screening; public school registration for children and registration at nearby schools while in temporary accommodation; adult language assessment and ESL classes; OHIP registration; children's activities; medical screening. A very big thank you to all partners involved in these efforts.

Reception House continues to play an effective leadership role in the resettlement of refugees in our community. We continue to build on our efforts this year and understand the crucial intersection between our programs and services and broader community engagement and partnerships that help to build a welcoming and inclusive community for all newcomers.



Family Partnership Program

When the Almadi* family arrived in Canada it was the beginning of February. They were initially housed at the Howard Johnsons hotel due to a lack of temporary housing at Reception House. While working with the housing team it became clear that there were few options for the family of nine to find permanent housing. As with all new refugees, the Almadi family had limited funds. Coupled with the lack of affordable housing in Waterloo Region a creative solution to their housing situation would need to be found.

In early March of 2016, Parkminster United Church was still waiting for word about the arrival of their privately sponsored refugee family. At the federal level, intake had been “turned off” temporarily as national targets for incoming refugees had been reached. Parkminster found themselves in a situation where they had a house rented, support groups at the ready and no refugee family on the horizon. Through some serendipitous communication Parkminster contacted

Reception House just as Reception House was launching their Family Partnership Program. An ideal candidate for the pilot project, Parkminster United and the Almadi’s became the first group matched through the Family Partnership Program.

The Almadi family viewed their new home on a Friday and moved in the following Monday. “Transportation from their temporary housing was a challenge due to the size of the family. We had to use a mini-bus to move them all!” remarked Rob MacQueen. The Parkminster group had a meal waiting for the family when they arrived so that they could concentrate on settling in.

Initially communication was the biggest challenge and can still remain an obstacle sometimes. Simple questions were often difficult to convey. Did they have enough warm clothing for the winter? Did they know where to buy food? With determination and patience, communication was possible, even without a common native tongue.

After three months the family had learned how to use the transportation system, the four boys

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of our clients.

were headed to camp for the summer and a high level of independence had been achieved.

The Almadi's are very determined to carve out their new life in Canada. Finding the right balance between support and personal space has been an ongoing process for Parkminster. "It's not a business relationship, it's personal." said MacQueen. "The family is in control of their own life. We need to support without smothering."

The relationship has been fruitful. It has been a learning experience for all parties involved and the outcomes have been incredibly positive.

"[Parkminster] has made us feel safe and at home in our new country. We have learned love, peace, cooperation and how to depend on ourselves," the Almadis expressed through a translator. "We do not have the words to describe how thankful we are for the partnership with Parkminster."

Volunteer Programs

Reception House relied more heavily on volunteers in 2015/16 than previous years. The sheer number of refugees that arrived in Waterloo Region meant that there were more volunteer opportunities and the need for more diverse volunteer programming.

The Children and Youth Programming alone involved over 100 volunteers, 440 children and youth, over 60 field trips on busses with an average of more than 60 youth per trip. These numbers are unprecedented for Reception House, let alone a single volunteer program.

Other volunteers helped out driving clients to medical appointments, some taught basic English or translated into Arabic for clients. In total, thousands of volunteer hours were selflessly donated to the cause. The outpouring of generosity from the community went beyond what could have been expected.

At Reception House, we want to thank everyone who gave of their time or money. Without your help we would not have been able to accomplish our goals. Thank you!



Financial Statement Summary

Statement of Operations 2015/16

REVENUE

Government grants	2,858,852
Grants	18,655
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	2,877,507
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EXPENSES

Bad debts	150
Charitable disbursements	470
Commercial accommodations	496,111
Depreciation	258
Groceries and incidentals	682,737
HST expense	64,457
Household items	116,023
Insurance	1,817
Interest and bank charges	4,177
Legal and accounting	19,722
Office	90,147
Rent	41,208
Repairs and maintenance	27,323
Salaries and benefits	1,181,838
Soccer for All program	8,216
Special Venture Partners program	4,000
Staff training and travel	732
Telephone	13,285
Translation	37,956
Transportation	37,293
Utilities	14,875
Workshops	9,332
	<hr/>
	2,852,127
	<hr/>

EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES

25,380

**Thank You to Our
Partners, Collaborators
and Funders**

Founding Partner

K-W House Church Assembly Inc.

Partners

Carizon

Community Justice Initiatives

Collaborators

Barber-Collins Security Services

The Centre for Family Medicine

City of Cambridge

City of Kitchener

City of Waterloo

Community Care Access Centre

Elevation Church

Family and Children's Services

Grand River Transit

House of Friendship

Immigration Partnership

Islamic Centre of Cambridge

Kindred Credit Union

Kitchener Fire Department

Kitchener Masjid

Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre

Kitchener Public Library

LifeLabs

Local Health Integration Network

Lutherwood

Mercedes Corporation

Muslim Association of Canada

Muslim Social Services

PharmaShoppe

Ray of Hope

Region of Waterloo Public Health

Sanctuary Refugee Health Clinic

ScotiaBank

Service Ontario

ShamRose for Syrian Culture

Shawarma Plus

TD Bank Canada

THEMUSEUM

Township of Woolwich

Victoria Park Neighbourhood Association

Volunteer Action Centre

Waterloo Masjid

Waterloo Region District School Board

The Waterloo Regional Museum

Waterloo Regional Police Services

Wayside Centre

YMCA

Funders

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigration Partnership Fund

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

Social Venture Partners

**Board of Directors,
Management Team
and Staff**

Board of Directors

John Kavanah, *Board President*
Heather Montgomery, *Board Vice-President*
Meghan Reitsma, *Board Treasurer*
Janet Howitt, *Board Secretary*
Ernie Regher, *Director*

Management Team

Carl Cadogan, *Executive Director*
Albert C. Lobe, *Interim Executive Director*
(October 2015 – March 2016)
Lynne Griffiths-Fulton, *Director of Programming*
Greg Awad Lobe, *Director of Housing*
Sam Lukoji, *Director of Finance and Human Resources*
Christian Snyder, *Communications Manager*

Staff

Abdullahi Said Hussein, *Case Manager*
Abeer Mubarak, *Settlement Worker**
Afyaa Abduldaim, *IT Support Worker*
Agnieszka Kiciak, *Finance Administrator*
Ahmed Abdelfattah, *Housing Specialist*
Aisha Hollyer, *Administrative Assistant*
Amal Ali Abdurahman, *Case Manager*
Amine Gebremariam, *Settlement Worker**
Ana Salic, *House Keeper*
Andrea Savu, *Youth Case Worker*
Awatef Al Khadour, *Settlement Worker*

Bashir Shahbaz, *Case Manager*
Cassandra Bangay, *Family Partnership Program Coordinator*
Faith Hussien, *Settlement Worker**
Gada Faez, *Settlement Counsellor*
Genet Habte, *Settlement Worker*
Helina Dost, *Settlement Worker**
Hser Ta Kay, *Case Manager*
Ibtihag Sidahmed, *Settlement Worker*
James Swaka, *Case Manager*
Kawthar Abu Issa, *Settlement Worker**
Layla Jabbour, *Case Manager*
Lello Shafi Abdalla, *Settlement Worker**
Matthew Senessie, *Settlement Worker**
Mudar Alshihabi, *Support Staff*
Nadra Tamourt, *Case Manager*
Ngun Tling Khua Thang, *Settlement Worker**
Paw Mo Gha, *Settlement Worker**
Priscilla Jamal, *Case Manager*
Ramla Mohamed Aweys, *Settlement Worker**
Rimah Al Ramahi, *Settlement Worker*
Safia Hersi, *Settlement Worker**
Sahour Ahmed, *Support Staff*
Shukri Abdulkadir, *Program Assistant*
Tanya Sawatsky, *Finance Specialist*
Thaer Abu-Awad, *Case Manager*
Vida Dehghansaie, *Housing Specialist*
Wilma Laku, *Case Manager*
Zainab Arkani, *Settlement Worker**
Zakim Tokhy, *Housing Specialist*

*Denotes on call staff



101