

# Refugees Welcome Crawley Newsletter Spring 2020



***Welcoming refugees and vulnerable migrants in and around Crawley***

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*'There are no strangers  
here, only friends we  
haven't yet met'. W.B. Yeats*



## **Spring 2020 Update:**

- RWC has become a Registered Charity and registered for Gift Aid, enabling us to make the most of taxpayers' donations.
- RWC volunteers have continued to welcome Syrian refugee families on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to Crawley and East Grinstead, working in partnership with West Sussex County Council to prepare homes and support families as they settle in.
- Ongoing RWC activities have included Women's and Men's English classes, 'Talk Clubs' and a Saturday morning Homework Club.
- RWC has also supported refugees and vulnerable migrants from diverse countries including Sri Lanka, Mauritius, The Gambia, Nigeria, Iran and Pakistan.
- We continue to be amazed at the resilience of those that we support as they adapt to their new environment, integrate into life in the local community and themselves offer hospitality and welcome in their homes.

***Cathy, RWC Chair***



### Quiz Night

Guests at RWC's first **Quiz Night** in November enjoyed a fun evening puzzling over the innovative questions set by our excellent quiz masters Louise and Ralph with tasty Syrian dishes to sample at half time. A big thank you to our Syrian cooks and to all who attended, resulting in a fantastic fundraising total of £1220!



### Christmas Party and the Cuckfield Tree Festival

Father Christmas put in an early December appearance at the RWC Christmas party, delighting children with presents and chocolates from his sack while guests also enjoyed the parachute games, impromptu Syrian dancing and a magic show for the children!



**Cuckfield Church** volunteers invited us to their magical Tree Festival where we marvelled at the beautifully decorated Christmas trees and enjoyed a festive tea.

**THRIVE**...and at the end of November, some of our families took part in a procession of illuminated lanterns created by participants at the THRIVE community festival in Crawley town centre.



## Volunteer Voices

**Ruth:** A chance conversation a year ago with a fellow choir member led me to learn more about RWC and its work. I was conscious of the unimaginable number of refugees in the Middle East and other countries, as a result of conflicts in Syria and elsewhere, but apart from making donations to relevant charities, I was unaware of anything else I could do to show my solidarity.

So I started by helping with the women's English classes in Crawley. As an ex languages teacher there was a partial skills match but you quickly realise teaching your native language is 'something else', particularly when the learners are used to a different alphabet! Also, as important as the language learning is, it is clear that introducing culture references, is also essential to improve understanding and confidence in the women. As with all volunteering, I have learnt as much from the experience as anything the women have learnt from the English classes. I have no idea how I would cope in their situation. The women are so grateful but we know they would do the same for us, if things were the other way round.

In the summer holidays I helped with a few sessions looking after the children, when some of the adults, who had recently arrived, had introductory English classes. If you're ever in this situation with children of a variety of ages and with limited English, my top tips would be – play UNO and sing Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes!

However, the opportunity I've enjoyed and valued most is the couple of times I've been able to help with getting the homes ready for new families! I realise it's a bit unusual but I actually enjoy cleaning and it's a 'win win' if doing something you like is a little contribution to making the families welcome and feel comfortable in their new homes.



**Margaret:** Since there has been no war directly involving the UK in the last seventy years, very few people here would remember what it was like to live through conflict. Not so for the people of Syria over the last seven years. Anyone watching Waad Al-Kateab's Oscar winning film 'For Sama' would understand why anyone would be forced to escape the war zone so graphically documented in this film.

Our government has accepted a limited number of refugee families from Syria as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Refugees Welcome Crawley is one of the many refugee support groups across the UK welcoming refugees into the local community.

RWC volunteers and Syrian families meet once a week at Talk Club where we socialise over tea and biscuits, play conversation games to help understanding and improve vocabulary and assist with paperwork questions. There are many toys in the meeting room which a local church generously allows us to use. We help the children with their homework, share their play and artwork and provide fruit which they always enjoy. It's good to see how the children develop and become more confident as time goes by in this safe environment.

RWC volunteers also help with transport to hospital and other appointments and arrange social events to include a larger group of families from the surrounding area. Being a member is very rewarding, observing how these families strive to be integrated into our society. We also enjoy the experience of learning more about their culture and developing long term friendships.



## Preparing a Welcome



Volunteers have been hard at work painting and assembling flatpack furniture to create a home from home for arriving refugee families whilst others who have been here a little longer provided a welcome meal for each new family on their first evening in their new homes.



## We need more Volunteers!

If you would like to help welcome and support refugees and vulnerable migrants in the local area and have an hour or two to spare each week or even just occasionally, Refugees Welcome Crawley would love to hear from you!

We have a range of rewarding and varied volunteering opportunities to suit different interests and skills from gardening, DIY and curtain making to English teaching, help with homework, befriending, driving and supporting refugee families and individuals to integrate in the local community.

Call Cathy to discuss how volunteering with RWC might suit you on 07968 688380 or email [rwccchair@gmail.com](mailto:rwccchair@gmail.com)

# VOLUNTEER



## Funding

Our grateful thanks go to The Longley Trust who awarded RWC a grant of £500 to fund Homework Club venue hire; to the Sussex Community Foundation Trust for a grant of £485 to pay for DBS checks for new volunteers and driving test costs for refugee learner drivers. Also to Worth Parish Church for their generous donation to our general funds.

If you would like to make a donation to our funds, either as a regular or one-off donation, please contact the Chair at [rwccchair@gmail.co.uk](mailto:rwccchair@gmail.co.uk) for paying in details and a Gift Aid form if applicable. Any donation towards our costs is much appreciated.

## RWC AGM,

**Sun 31<sup>st</sup> May, 3.00 – 5.00pm, venue tbc.**

If you would like to attend and are not already on our email mailing list, please email [rwccchair@gmail.com](mailto:rwccchair@gmail.com) for an invitation and further details.

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