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NEWS

GFORCe seeks home or townhouse for Syrian family

By Janet Duval
GFORCe

Georgetown's GFORCe refugee sponsorship group is almost ready to welcome a Syrian family here. Community response has been overwhelming, according to GFORCe leaders, but there's still one thing the group needs: affordable rental housing for a year.

"All the real estate agencies in town have been so helpful," says procurement chair Don Ablett, "but the vacancy rate is extremely low here. We still haven't been able to find rental space for a family of five."

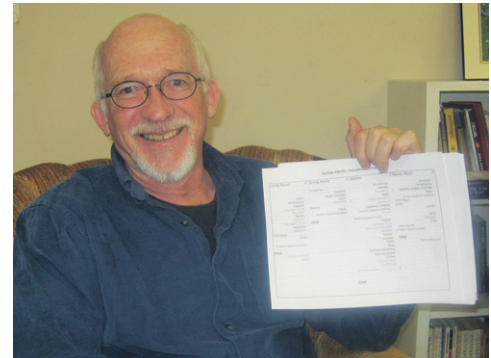
Ideally, GFORCe hopes to find a three- or four-bedroom home or townhouse in central Georgetown that would be available April 1. The group has funds to make rent payments for at least a year, and is heartened by the fierce determination of the Syrian parents to find work and start paying rent themselves. The father, a carpenter, must first learn English, while the mother and the three school-age children speak it fairly well.

"We're told that the vast majority of places are rented by word of mouth," says Ablett, who hopes someone will give him a lead to suitable housing. Ablett can be reached at donablett@cogeco.ca or 905-702-1330.

Meanwhile, one local real estate agent has offered to waive his fees if he finds space; another knows Arabic and has offered to be an interpreter.

"Community support for this family has been fantastic," reports Ablett.

Everyone he meets says "How can I help?" The group always welcomes donations to boost the \$30,000 it has raised, since



GFORCe Procurement Chair Don Ablett holds up the financials surrounding the group's efforts to bring a Syrian refugee family to Georgetown. To help go online to canadahelps.org and search for GFORCe. Submitted photo

it must guarantee all expenses for this family for a year. With growing children who like music and basketball, even the cost of running shoes adds up. One way to help is to give online at canadahelps.org. Search for GFORCe, then click "Include fundraising pages" down the lefthand column. Every donor gets an instant tax receipt.

GFORCe is a coalition of Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Andrew's United Church, St. John's United Church and a host of community volunteers. Their Syrian family, who are Catholic Christians, live in great danger because of their faith. When they learned they'd been chosen, they were quick to email their new Georgetown friends.

"What you and the churches are doing is more than we ever expected. We pray to God to protect you and give you health and joy forever."

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