

NEWS

Another local group emerges to sponsor refugees

By Janet Duval
Special to The IFP

The force is with us. Three local churches have come together to form the Georgetown Friends of Refugees Committee (GFORC, pronounced "G Force"), planning for the arrival of a Syrian family.

Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Andrew's United Church, and St. John's United Church are raising funds and preparing their application to sponsor a family of at least four people.

Meanwhile, they have strong teams in place for procurement (housing and furniture), welcoming (airport reception, language training, translators, and community orientation), transport, health, job hunting, and more. Several members of the general public have also stepped into leadership positions within the group.

If they can quickly raise the \$30,000 required to apply, then the coalition expects to welcome a family as early as this spring.

"The government is anxious to place these people and get them into communities" says GFORC Chair Dennis McLay.

"With all the volunteer talent and goodwill in our three congregations, we'll be ready."

In the long run, GFORC will need substantially

more than \$30,000 to honour its commitment to sponsor a family for one year. Rental rates in this area are much higher than the government's benchmark.

Anyone who donates to GFORC will receive a charitable receipt, which can be used to reduce personal income tax. Cheques from the community are very welcome, and can be made out to any of the three churches, with the memo line GFORC. For more information please contact Dennis dennismclay@sympatico.ca or call 905-877-2948.

The group will be sourcing household goods, clothing, computer equipment, and perhaps a vehicle for their family, but will not be ready to receive them until they know specific needs, according to procurement chair Don Ablett. He can be reached at donablett@cogeco.ca.

The GFORC group emerged from a public meeting arranged by the Georgetown Ministerial Association last December. Other groups that formed as a result of that event include the Halton Hills Coalition for Refugees (HHCR). The town has a history of welcoming refugees, including more than 100 Armenian orphans who were housed and educated in what is now Cedarvale Park in the 1920s, and Vietnamese boat people sponsored by local churches and families 40 years ago.

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