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COMMUNITY

Acton church to welcome two Syrian refugee families

By **Melanie Hennessey**
Special to The IFP

An Acton church is gearing up to welcome two Syrian refugee families to the community.

The wheels are in motion at St. Alban's Anglican Church, which is working with the Anglican Diocese of Niagara to raise funds that will cover refugee sponsorship and settlement costs.

The church has also formed a settlement plan committee that's already secured housing, furniture and a vast list of community resources for the newcomers.

"We've received an unbelievable response from the community," said committee chair Pam Sheldon. "People are walking in off the street offering money and any other way they can help. You just feel so blessed to be part of this community."

St. Alban's priest Brian Galligan said the families' arrival is imminent, with more details and firm dates expected to come from Diocese any day now.

"There's a degree of urgency. Every day

that they're in a refugee camp or trying to dodge bullets and bombs is a day that they can ill afford," he said. "It's so urgent that we get these people to safety and help them start a new life."

Through the Diocese of Niagara, St. Alban's is participating in the federal government's Blended Visa Office-Referred Program, which matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency with private sponsors in Canada. For every refugee family being brought in, the Diocese has to raise \$12,500, which is then matched by the government.

Galligan said a further \$7,000 is also needed for each family to cover the costs of incidentals like furniture, clothing, food, etc.

"We've already exceeded that amount for the first family and are still accepting donations for the second," he said. "There's tremendous interest being generated in the community to support these refugee families. We're just trying to do whatever we can to help these folks."

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