

Refugee support group calls Halton residents to action

By Kathryn Boyle
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Congregation of Mississauga, and things started to happen.

"They wanted three levels of involvement, so a steering committee and the organizers, some people that were on call, and silent partners," Balogh explained.

Positions were also created for treasurer, government liaison, and family liaison. By this time, more than 30 people were part of the group, all between Mississauga, Oakville and Halton, all sharing the dream of privately sponsoring a Syrian family.

The team turned to the Canadian Unitarian Council, an organization that provides support for religious exploration, spiritual growth and social responsibility in Canada, and was told they had to have a minimum of \$30,000 to apply.

"So we created a bank account. All of the members in the group,



Pam Dickenson (left) and Sue Balogh, members of Terra Firma Halton, stand in the gathering of furniture to be used in a furniture to house a Syrian family the group sponsored.
Photo by Kathryn Boyle

which total close to 40, all made a private pledges, and luckily came up with the initial \$30,000," Balogh said.

By December, the group was advised they were matched up with a

family, but all the details are confidential at the present time.

To support the family for one year, the \$30,000 might cover all the expenses. But Terra Firma Halton wants to make sure they're covered

for the first two years, giving them a new total of \$70,000.

"We're still wanting to move forward with more financing, just in case," member Pam Dickenson said. "We're supposed to look after the family for 12 months, but this could extend into two years. So we still need more money to carry us into the second year."

The money would go towards rent, food, education, clothing, an interpreter and anything health related, including dentist and doctor visits. Finding these resources were divided among the group, assigning members to find housing, clothing, furniture and other types of services, including childcare, employment and language training.

"We're very organized, I'm pleased to say," Balogh said.

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