



SPRIG

## Saanich Peninsula Refugee Initiative Group

### UPDATE #16

Feb. 15, 2017

*"I leave my home, my room, my country, my friends and give up everything I aspire for since childhood. I wish I had a magic lamp. Four years later at the Victoria airport I see people with signs – WELCOME - like someone from their family is absent. I cried because I felt happy. I felt my love for them. Now I know their names. Now I have possessed ambition. Now I feel they are my family and my relatives."*

From Fatma's story

2017 has brought more change for Fatma and her family. Because they know that command of the language is key to successful settlement here, they are focused on learning English. Fatma is now a proud, happy student in Camosun College's English Language Development program. She is working very hard speaking, reading, writing and listening to English. Fatma's father is studying at the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA), her mother at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) and her young brother is progressing well in grade two.

Learning a new language is head-hurting work. Thankfully, volunteers from SPRIG, ICA and VIRCS spend time each week one-on-one with Fatma and her parents to support them as they learn English. Thank you to Joyce Vandall and her language team of volunteers for their kindness and their commitment to support this family.

#### **SPEAKING WITH SAFAA:**

We still wait for Safaa to be interviewed by the Canadian visa office in Lebanon for approval of her immigration application. Meanwhile, two of us take turns speaking with her every week via Skype. Safaa has a good basic knowledge of English and she is keen to improve. She is homeschooling the children and teaching them English. She reports that they regularly tell her "I love you, Mommy".

#### **MORE VOLUNTEERS STEPPING UP:**

It takes a strong team of people to support a family of newcomers as they settle into our community. Recently several people have contacted SPRIG wanting to get involved in supporting refugee families. Others are offering household goods and clothing. Thank you so much for stepping forward.

Refugee sponsor groups like SPRIG legally undertake to provide a considerable list of settlement support responsibilities. It is impossible to know how those tasks will unfold with each sponsored newcomer. However, we are now preparing for the arrival of Safaa and her four young children by reviewing how we have upheld our responsibilities with Fatma. From the government website, we now believe Safaa may arrive late this spring or early summer. Closer to their arrival date we will hold a Settlement Information and Planning Workshop for those who want to be actively involved in their support.

#### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT:**

By the end of 2016, St. John's Church Refugee Sponsorship Fund was topped up to meet SPRIG's goals. Thank you very much for your generosity. Your charitable tax receipts will be sent out before the end of February. To donate your Optimum Card points to SPRIG go to <https://www1.shoppersdrugmart.ca/en/optimum-new>.

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