



Saanich Peninsula Refugee Initiative Group

UPDATE #5

March 10, 2016

“MUSICIANS FOR REFUGEES” BENEFIT RAISES MORE THAN \$2500 - A HUGE THANK YOU TO:

- Lauren and Jim Stubbs, Nancy and Andrew Washeim (West Coast Players), and Anne McDougall, Sue Martin, Lee Anderson, and Trevor MacHattie (Sooke Harbour String Quartet): the nationally and internationally acclaimed musicians who donated a thrilling afternoon of music to a full house.
- St. John's Church for donating the venue, Island Blue the printing, and Tanner's Books selling the tickets.
- Martha McCracken, Linda Black, Carolyn Cade, Lisa Greenly, Dorothy Usher, Alexis White, Tracy White, and Michelle Wright - the team who organized this successful event. See photos on www.sprig.me

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Does SPRIG have a refugee family yet? What's the hold up? Good questions! Perhaps you have been frustrated by our silence in the last month. When we first ventured down this road we were told that it was complex and challenging, and that we would need patience and flexibility. We do not have a family yet, but not from lack of trying. Since UPDATE #4 the road to refugee sponsorship has been bumpy. As one of 35 constituency groups under the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA)'s Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) umbrella, we have been able to move only as fast as the ICA and the government bureaucracy affecting it has permitted. Steering committee members are each bound by an ICA confidentiality agreement so we cannot disclose any details of discussions we had amongst ourselves or with potential family members regarding specific family case profiles.

To understand the current context, it is important to distinguish between three types of refugee sponsorships:

- **Government Assisted Refugee (GAR):** the Canadian government fully funds and provides settlement support for these refugees who are referred to Canadian visa posts by the UNHCR. GARs are not an option for SPRIG. However, there are ICA and other volunteer opportunities to help with the settlement of GARs.
- **Blended Visa Office Refugee (BVOR):** the Canadian government cost-shares refugee resettlement with the SAHs for refugees referred to Canadian visa posts by the UNHCR. Since early February, the government's weekly list of pre-cleared BVOR refugees has not been issued, so BVORs are not currently an option for SPRIG either.
- **Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR):** individuals or groups use their own resources and time to sponsor refugees. The sponsorship group puts forward the name of a refugee or refugee family. This is the option that SPRIG has been actively pursuing with the ICA. A family has been identified as a potential match but we have not yet met with the local family member to confirm the match.

On March 8, 2016, IRCC Minister McCallum announced 2016 quotas for immigrants, including refugee quotas for each SAH. At this point, and until things are finalized at the end of the month, it appears that the ICA quota for family link cases is not large enough to accommodate all the refugee families matched with ICA constituency groups, including SPRIG. The ICA recommends that SPRIG consider making a PSR application in partnership with St. John's United Church as a "community sponsor", since SPRIG has kept all donations in the St. John's Refugee Sponsorship Fund to date. While the ICA gains clarity on its position, we will explore this recommended option.

In the meantime, SPRIG has enough money to support a refugee family of five to seven people for one year. Be assured, we remain steadfast in our resolve to sponsor a refugee family to the Saanich Peninsula. We are very grateful for your support, encouragement and patience.

www.sprig.me



sprig@gmx.com



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