



**FAIRLAWN**  
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**FAIRLAWN AVENUE  
UNITED CHURCH**

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

What a difference you've made in the lives of the Syrian refugees that our church has sponsored! We could never have done it without your generous help and donations!

Here is an update on our refugee sponsorship cases in 2016. Each case is supported by a team of six or seven individuals who are primarily responsible for integration.

### **Siham's Story**



Fairlawn welcomed Siham to Canada in late December 2015. We had an apartment ready and furnished, which Siham moved into with her three daughters Carmen (age 22), Jana and Judy (twins age 8). They were all truly overwhelmed with the love and thoughtfulness that had gone into preparing for their arrival and first days in Canada. They knew absolutely no one here. Since Day 1, Siham has been saying, *"Fairlawn is my family now!"*

We were lucky that Siham had taught herself quite a bit of English over the last year she was living illegally in Lebanon. Carmen also spoke good English. They both began full time English classes in Level 6 (high intermediate) and have improved considerably. The twins were thrown into Grade 3, speaking virtually no English and having never been to a real school. Fortunately, they had a wonderful teacher as well as a devoted volunteer from the church who tutored them twice a week. Their teacher said they were almost caught up to their grade level in June. This fall they are not in the same class, so we hope that will help them make their own friends.

Siham has an impressive background as a social worker and her employment goal has been to find a job in the social services field. She has had two short-term contracts doing administrative work, one at a law firm and one at the Toronto District School Board, which have helped her get a feel for the Canadian workplace. She landed both these contracts because someone met her personally and wanted to help. She is a delightful, passionate, outgoing person and is a good networker. She has now begun another contract position, expanding on her initiative as a volunteer, running support groups for Syrian women who are government-assisted refugees. (This means they have no sponsor group helping them with integration. As Siham says, she would not be where she is today without a sponsor group.) And she has just landed a part time settlement worker position!

Our financial support ends this December. Naturally we all hope and pray that Siham will find permanent full-time employment, ideally using her skills as a social worker. Carmen has completed nine months of fulltime ESL and is now investigating community college programs with a focus on art and design. She was not able to complete more than one semester of university in Damascus before having to flee. Carmen has had a part-time job in a restaurant and is looking for a new part-time position now.

Life in Toronto has not been just about study and work. The twins have learned to swim and joined the Junior Choir at Fairlawn. Siham and the twins spent a week at Camp Scugog this summer (Fairlawn has a fundraising drive for the camp every year). It was the highlight of their summer, for sure!

### **Mohamad's Story**

Mohamad arrived in early February, a young 21-year-old Syrian-Kurd, who had been on his own since the age of 14. He spoke no English and had no education beyond elementary school. Communication has been a challenge for his team! One of the first things he shared with his team was his desire to



be called Rooney – which is his real Kurdish name – rather than the Arabic name he was given by the Syrian regime. His team has agreed to use Rooney going forward.

Rooney spent his first four months living with a couple from Fairlawn and going to English classes full-time. He has made good progress and is now in a combination of Level 2 and 3 ESL. His immediate goal is to get to Level 4 as soon as possible so he can start taking high school credit courses. To help him achieve this objective, his team is looking for a tutor to work one-on-one with him a couple of days a week. He is sharing an apartment with another Kurdish immigrant named Kawa, who is helping him with integration. Kawa's older brother Mike has also become actively involved in working with Rooney's team to help him be successful.

Rooney had a lot of good Canadian experiences this summer, including fishing and camping, and is playing soccer weekly with a group of friends.

### **Ousama's Story**



As soon as our first family arrived in Canada, we learned that Carmen had left her fiancé behind. Our church agreed to sponsor him as a refugee and Ousama arrived in July. He is very outgoing and speaks English well. He is taking an upgrading course at Centennial College for newcomers, in Project Management, as well as a Business English course. Ousama is very anxious to “give back” to Canada and has several volunteer opportunities on the go. Both Ousama and Carmen are very grateful to be reunited. Ousama said, *“I told Carmen that these are the kind of people who I can spend my life with, learning from them and getting inspired.”*

### **Souher's Story**

Fairlawn has been accepted as sponsors of another Syrian family. Souher and her husband Raid have four children, ages 2 to 15. They are currently living in dangerous circumstances in Lebanon, anxiously awaiting an interview date with the Canadian Embassy. Souher's brother is already living in Toronto and will help with integration but is not able to financially sponsor them. We understand that Souher and Raid are engineers and speak some English.

### **Donations to Refugee Fund Welcome**

Although we have sufficient funds to begin the sponsorship of the new family, past experience has indicated that we will need more money to meet all the contingencies that arise, be they medical, dental or ones as yet unknown! Donations to the Refugee Fund will be gratefully received! For more information or to donate, see <http://www.fairlawchurch.ca/refugees/>.

As we look back on the past ten months (plus all the months of preparation before the first arrival), we just cannot believe how amazing this experience has been. All members of the teams, plus many more people who have volunteered and gotten to know the newcomers, feel enriched by the experience and honoured to be part of it. We have been so blessed with all kinds of support and of course, none of this could have happened without financial donors like you. You are part of a project that is saving lives! The congregation of Fairlawn Avenue United is very grateful for generous donations, large and small. Thank you!

Kathleen Magladry, Chair  
Refugee Sponsorship Team