

2016 // YEAR IN REVIEW

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Lifeline Syria Challenge

in collaboration with OCAD University, University of Toronto and York University

**Ryerson
University**

Office of the
Vice-President,
Research & Innovation



Enjoying a winter skate with new friends



Happy faces all around after an early morning arrival at Toronto Pearson International Airport

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MESSAGE FROM WENDY CUKIER, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE LEAD OF THE RYERSON UNIVERSITY LIFELINE SYRIA CHALLENGE



The Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge (RULSC) was launched on July 20, 2015 to respond to what has been described as “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era”. Encouraged by former Ryerson University President, Sheldon Levy, and with the support of the Ryerson Executive Team, faculty, staff, students and partners, we launched with the aim of encouraging the Ryerson community to form 11 teams to each privately sponsor a Syrian refugee family, totaling 44 people. We called on other post-secondary institutions across the country to do the same. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteer coordinator, we mobilized 100 students, staff and faculty to support the effort, and with the work of committed staff, we created a rocking website that made it easy to join in, volunteer, sponsor or donate.

We wanted to make a modest contribution to support the goals of the citizens’ group Lifeline Syria, an organization that members of the Ryerson community helped to launch. Modelled on the success of Operation Lifeline, which helped to privately sponsor and settle 60,000 Indochinese refugees in 1979-80, its goal is to encourage the private sponsorship of 1,000 Syrian refugees in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) over two years.

The success of RULSC is remarkable. By September 2015, we had more than doubled our goal and formed 25 teams to sponsor 100 refugees. Then, thanks to the initiative of Sara Diamond, President of OCAD U, and the support of Meric Gertler, President of the University of Toronto, and Mamdouh Shoukri, President of York University, we were able to expand the initiative to include four GTA universities and to triple our goal to form 75 teams to sponsor 300 refugees. We surpassed that goal a mere 6 months after RULSC was launched. I’m proud to say that we now have 102 teams and have raised enough funds to sponsor 146 families consisting of over 500 people. We are being recognized not just in Canada, but around the world as an innovative leader. We have even given a presentation to staff in the US Senate on the model of Canadian private sponsorship and the work of RULSC.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of over 5,500 donors, the hard work of more than 1,000 volunteers, our knowledgeable staff, and our dedicated teams who are working together to support Syrian refugees resettling in Canada. Already 18 families totaling 104 people have arrived, and the benefits are not just to them. Sponsors and volunteers have described the experience as life changing. Our students are gaining unparalleled experiential learning and applied research opportunities.

We have learned a lot about driving social change. First and foremost, a shared vision and sense of urgency allowed staff, faculty, students and community partners to engage quickly, even though processes and resources were not all in place. Lean startup principles — build, assess, learn, iterate — enabled us to respond quickly as events unfolded. A simple but compelling technology-enabled platform made it easy to communicate, engage and act. Like other innovations in the sharing economy, RULSC addresses emergent needs by bringing together people with money, skills, time and other resources, which allows a high level of customization. We were also lucky to be surrounded by people who said “yes” when they could have said “no” – our Advancement and Financial Services folks were amazing.

But most of all, I am proud of the Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge team. They are self-motivated and goal-oriented, doing whatever it takes to get as many people as possible here safely and quickly. The Government of Canada unexpectedly imposed a limit on the number of private sponsorship applications supporting Syrian refugees that could be submitted through Sponsorship Agreement Holders. On March 30, 2016 at 8 p.m., at a community meeting held in Toronto, the Parliamentary Secretary to Minister McCallum, MP Arif Virani, announced that only applications submitted to the government on March 31 (i.e. in just over 24 hours) would be processed within the year, or early 2017. The team responded immediately returning to the office to work through the night. In cooperation with Lifeline Syria and the United Church of Canada, RULSC was able to submit 30 cases matching most, but not all, of our remaining teams.

There is still more to do – many more newcomers to resettle, more volunteers to get engaged, and there will no doubt be bumps along the way. This report highlights the results of our efforts to-date and we look forward to sharing more of our successes in the months ahead.



Wendy Cukier, MA, MBA, PhD, DU (hon) LLD (hon) M.S.C.

Executive Lead, Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge



Wendy with sponsored Ashoka Fellow, Ahmad, and his wife, Manal

THE GENESIS OF THE RYERSON UNIVERSITY LIFELINE SYRIA CHALLENGE

On June 17th, 2015, Sheldon Levy hit send on an email to Wendy Cukier. His email asked for a response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. In less than an hour, the Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge leadership was born. A month later, the program was officially launched. Here are highlights from the minute-by-minute recap of how it unfolded.

June 17, 2015 -Ryerson Univeristy Lifeline Syria Challenge leadership comes together:

10:12 pm - To: <Ryerson executive team> From: <wcukier@ryerson.ca>: John Tory came out in support of Ratna's Lifeline Syria campaign, challenging other cities to follow suit.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/06/17/citizen-led-initiative-lifeline-syria-working-to-bring-1000-syrian-refugees-to-the-gta.html>

10:27 pm - To: <executive team> From: <slevy@ryerson.ca>: We should discuss what Ryerson can do specifically to help. Wendy can you pull together an idea?

10:29 pm To: <executive team> From: <wcukier@ryerson.ca>: Great! You are all part of a sponsorship group for starters! I think our students could play a big role.... Having an extensive network of volunteers to help acclimatize families to Toronto would be huge. I was 23 when our family came and the amount of boring details - finding housing furniture navigating the subway learning how banking works etc. etc. etc. - can be mammoth. Maybe RSU would help... I think a number of the student groups would rise to the occasion...immigrants helping immigrants.... refugees paying it forward.

10:44 pm - To: <ratna.omidvar@ryerson.ca> From: <wcukier@ryerson.ca>: Sheldon wants Ryerson to take a lead. I suggested getting students and faculty and donors quickly to set a target for sponsors and then challenge other universities to match or beat us....

10:58 pm - To: <wcukier@ryerson.ca> From: <ratna.omidvar@ryerson.ca>: OK... Let me know how best to proceed. So delighted that RU wants to do this.

11:04 pm - To: <student groups and leaders> From: <wcukier@ryerson.ca>: Greetings: We are leading participants in a new initiative.... To helping to sponsor and resettle Syrian refugees. It is modeled on Operation Lifeline, organized in 1979 which brought many Vietnamese refugees to Canada, including many of our students, graduates and their parents.... I am trying to quickly get a group of like minded students who will help participate with the sponsorship groups, not in terms of money but volunteer time. I did this when I was a student and it's very labour intensive helping immigrants navigate finding apartments, jobs, health care, banking, shopping, English lessons etc.

11:07 pm - To: <ratna.omidvar@ryerson.ca> From <wcukier@ryerson.ca>: I am happy to take the lead on this and keep you informed so you can keep the bigger project moving....I think Ryerson could stage the Lifeline Syria Challenge - pushing other post secondary institutions to dive in. Students are a huge potential resource.

11:08 pm - To: <wcukier@ryerson.ca> From: <samantha.jackson@ryerson.ca>: Definitely count me in.

July 20, 2015 - Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge launches with a rocking crowd funding website, more than 100 student volunteers and commitments of forming 11 teams to sponsor 11 families.

IMPACT SUMMARY

OUR GOAL:

75
Teams

.....

75
Syrian
Families

.....

300
Syrian
Newcomers

WHERE WE ARE TODAY:

 <p>102 Teams</p>	 <p>up to 150 Families Sponsored</p>
 <p>104 Refugees Arrived</p>	 <p>\$4.5M Fundraised To Date</p>
 <p>4 Universities</p>	 <p>1,000+ Volunteers</p>
 <p>100+ Media Mentions</p>	 <p>70,000+ Web Page Views</p>

MEET THE NEWCOMER SYRIAN FAMILIES & SPONSORSHIP TEAMS



Syrian newcomer children enjoying High Park in Toronto

They are here!

To date, more than 100 of the Syrian newcomers sponsored by the RULSC have arrived, thanks to the hard work and perseverance of our sponsors and volunteers as well as generous donations. Some families wish not to be identified but others are willing to share their stories. Here are some highlights.

Team Everest, led by Senator Ratna Omidvar, is one of the founding teams

Mahmoud Al Rassoul and his wife have settled in Scarborough with their eight children and extended family. The children are enrolled in school, the adults in language classes and Mahmoud has passed the initial tests needed to pursue an apprenticeship in the construction industry. “They are cheerful and resilient, ready to take on the challenge of building this new life”, remarks Ratna, one of the first eleven leaders to sign up for the RULSC. “One of the first things the father of the family expressed was his desire to find work. The kids seem genuinely excited by the new circumstances. We send thanks to all for their generosity, and the opportunity and hope it is creating.” The Al Rassoul family arrived on December 18, 2015 and a second family of four sponsored by Team Everest, Wael, Abir, Tammar and Tala Al Hazzaa, arrived on February 8, 2016 and adapted very quickly to their new life. Within a few months, Wael had landed a job in his field of experience as a salesman at Lowe’s. Abir is studying hard to get her license in hair dressing. Tammar was thrilled to have been accepted at Ryerson in an undergraduate program starting this fall and her sister, Tala, has taken to her high school like a fish to water. The family initially settled with their sister and brother-in-law, who are associated with Team Everest, but are now happily located on their own.

The Al Rassoul family checking out the “Toronto” sign on a chilly day



Team Valerie Pringle is one of the founding teams

Ryerson Alum, Valerie Pringle, was among the founding 11 team leaders that stepped up to sponsor a family when RULSC launched, and quickly pulled in colleagues and friends from across the city. Their sponsored family, the Al Hasans arrived on January 8, 2016 and were greeted at their airport hotel by a phalanx of well-wishers. After a welcoming party, Batal and his family of six were whisked off to their fully furnished apartment in Mississauga. Within days they were welcomed at an event hosted by the Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau who brought gifts and good wishes. In early June, sponsors accompanied the Al Hasans to Niagara Falls and then to a birthday party in Niagara-on-Lake to celebrate Batal's 50th birthday, just before Ramadan. The family, many sponsor group members, and Qusai, their star student volunteer and Arabic interpreter, enjoyed an outdoor barbecue lunch, birthday cake and lots of splashing and swimming in the pool. During lunch, 10 year old Nasimi sang "O Canada!" to the applause and proud smiles of everyone at the celebration. Members of the family are eager to find employment in their new home. Fozie wants to become a hair dresser and with the help of her sponsors, has found a local hair dresser in Mississauga where she can learn about what it takes. Meanwhile, son Ali is currently interviewing with Paramount Fine Foods for part-time work while school is out for the summer. Valerie remarked that, "The Al Hasans are a wonderful family and it has been great to get to know them."

Team Ashoka, led by Wendy Cukier, is one of the founding teams

On February 10, 2016 Ahmad Edilbi and his family arrived in Canada. Ahmad is an Ashoka fellow with a Bachelor's degree and near perfect English. His organization, Dubarah (meaning "I've got your back" in Arabic), provides employment, education, and job support to Syrian refugees around the world. Ahmad and his family settled in quickly with the children getting ready for school and celebrating a third birthday party with the sponsors and RULSC team. Manal is looking forward to building a network and securing childcare so she can work and pursue further education. Ahmad has already been "paying it forward" by networking to build awareness of the Syrian refugee crisis and working to help other newcomers resettle.



The Al Hasan children posing for a photo with Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau

Team Prince Edward County (PEC) Syria, led by Caryln Moulton and Kathleen Powderley

With 14 members, the Al Jasems were our first family to land in Toronto and head to Prince Edward County, two and one half hours east, on a large bus. The house has a fireplace and a yard and eventually the family may purchase it from their sponsors. More than 100 local people have been involved in helping the family settle – providing housing, schooling, health care, and even a van, which has proven essential in an area with limited public transit. The children have acclimatized quickly, and learned to ice skate in January in spite of not being fond of the cold and the snow. Several months of English lessons and school are definitely paying off. And after years of inactivity the kids are thrilled to be in school. Major highlights of their first year in Canada include Rahaf graduating from grade 8 and Slieman completing a co-op placement with a plumber. He is working for a local kayak manufacturer. Ramez is working for McDonald's and a local caterer while Khitam is working part-time for a small local inn. Ahmad has secured a part-time job at a local restaurant and is doing landscaping in a sculpture garden at an art gallery. Abdel Malek is also working part-time doing landscaping as well. Sadly, at the age of 71, Hadji, the matriarch of the Al Jasem family, passed away at the beginning of May. The Al Jasem family arrived on October 29, 2015.

Ripple Refugee Project, led by Andrew Fitzgerald

The Abdallah family, a multigenerational family of eight, is adapting to life in Canada and is beginning to engage in the community after arriving on November 24, 2015. The adults are enrolled in ESL classes, while the children are now fully immersed in day-to-day life at school. The Abdallah family and their sponsors are constantly working on improving their communication through English apps, and most importantly, cooking. On a recent blog post, Andrew Fitzgerald shared pictures and recipes of a recent cooking exchange where the Abdallah women shared traditional Syrian recipes and cooking tips with their sponsors and guests.



A big “thank you” from the Al Jasem family and their relatives

Team East End Cares, led by Ashely McCall and Chris Monahan

Another family is settling in the east end of Toronto. The Morad family arrived in Toronto on a windy winter day on December 21, 2015. Feras, only 4, had been diagnosed with leukemia but is recovering well alongside his sister Hoda, 6, who was his bone marrow donor. Both children are adapting quickly to their new home. Hamzeh, the father, was quickly hired by a local grocer and enrolled in ESL courses, and his wife Ghader Bsmar also enrolled in ESL. Both Hamzeh and Ghader are now working on obtaining their high school diplomas. Already an active volunteer, Ghader is supporting other newcomer families to help them get adjusted. Her positive outlook, in spite of the hardships faced by her immediate and extended family, is an example of resilience, and a source of strength for other newcomers. The children are adjusting well to school and the team worked to enroll the children in a variety of day camps throughout the summer. Ashley laughingly reflects on their adventures with Google Translate and their comical miscommunications along the way, but happily reports that everyone's English is progressing well. There are no guarantees that refugees and their sponsors will get along, but Hamzeh says to his sponsors "There are no barriers. You are like family."

Team Toronto West Refugee Collective, led by Kerry McLorg

Abdullah, Eman and their four children (two girls, ages 9 and 10 and two boys, ages 4 and 6) arrived in Canada on February 11, 2016 without a clear understanding of the sponsorship process. By Abdullah's own account, when they were collected at the airport he wondered "You mean we're leaving the hotel? What do these people want in return?" Now in their downtown apartment with bikes for the children and a Canadian flag in the window, the family has begun exploring their new home, including traveling to Niagara Falls, and the children are settling in nicely.

Montreal Sponsorship Team, led by Paul DiStefano

The Montreal Sponsorship Team welcomed Mohammad and his family of four to Montreal on May 30, 2016. They are settled into an apartment, signed up for French courses and both children are enrolled at summer camp. The youngest son, a 7 year old boy, has non-verbal autism. He was given a spot at a specialized private school for autism called Giant Steps, where two of the sponsors have autistic children enrolled. They also offered him a place at their special camp run by occupational therapists. We were very pleased to learn from his parents that when the weekend arrived, he pointed to his backpack because he wanted to return to camp! He had never been to school nor away from his parents before. The family has expressed that they never thought such a wonderful school could exist for their son. His older brother learned to ride a bike the third day after he arrived. The family is doing well and is so happy to be in Montreal.



The Abdallah family gathered with lead sponsor, Andrew FitzGerald, for tea and cookies

Team Anver Saloojee is one of the founding teams. Date of family arrival – December 20, 2015.

We are incredibly fortunate to have Abdul Hakim and Adham in our lives. They are exceptional young men who, despite the challenges they have faced in their lives, are adapting incredibly well to their new lives in Toronto. They wish to thank everyone who has been so wonderfully generous in helping them come to Canada. While they lament the destruction of their home city of Homs they are excited at being in their new city of Toronto.

Team Christina Sass-Kortsak is one of the founding teams. Date of family arrival – December 31, 2015.

I jumped at the opportunity to get involved with RULSC and am very much looking forward to contributing to their work. As a human resources leader at Ryerson University I know the work we are doing with RULSC to welcome people to our country and enable them to make their lives here will further enrich the fabric of our workforce and society in Canada. We welcomed a family of four on New Year's Eve.

Team Michael Adams and Thuy Nguyen is one of the founding teams. Date of family arrival – February 22, 2016.

We sponsored a family of nine - Mohammed, the father, Emtithal, the mom, and Narjes, Reham, Rawan, Noor, Nariman, Diaa and Zain, ranging in ages from one and a half to 12. They live in a three bedroom apartment in Thorncliffe Park which we were able to secure and furnish prior to their arrival. Mohammed and Emtithal attend LINC with day care provided for Diaa and Zain. Narjes attends Valley Park Middle School and the other four kids Grenoble Public School. Nariman has stopped trying to run home from kindergarten to be with her younger brothers and now enjoys school. With the school year now over, we are pleased all are doing well and looking forward to summer camp.

All are working on their English, with the kids of course making the most rapid progress. After language acquisition and schooling, employment for Mohammed will emerge as priority number one. He is a welder, so we are hoping to find something for him in construction this fall perhaps combined with a course at a community college.

Mehru Ali. Date of family arrival – December 20, 2015.

The fact that we were able to connect with the family via phone and email was helpful because it gave the family a sense that there is someone in Canada looking out for them. We found that having Arabic speaking interpreters provided a strong anchor for building our relationship. It has been a rewarding experience, and it has taken a lot more time and effort than we initially thought, but we are happy to do it. We welcomed a family of six in late 2015.

Haynes Connell Foundation. Date of family arrival – February 29, 2016.

Martin Connell and Linda Haynes founded the Haynes Connell Foundation in 1983 as a way for their family to give back to the Toronto and global community. All members of the Haynes Connell Family and Foundation live in Toronto, and in February welcomed a Syrian family of five.

Tomaz Jardim. Date of family arrival – February 29, 2016.

While the individual contribution of our team – the sponsorship of a single family of refugees – is small in comparison to the catastrophe that continues to unfold in Syria, we are proud to be part of a collective community response that aims to help people in need, one family at a time. We welcomed a family of three in late February.



Syrian newcomer children exploring the neighbourhood park

Cape Breton Lifeline Syria Challenge. Date of family arrival – February 29, 2016.

Our group represents the desire of many individuals and organizations across Cape Breton to organize a strong and coordinated response to the Syrian refugee crisis. We believe we have both a responsibility and the capacity to respond to this crisis and aspire to settle 1,000 Syrians in Cape Breton over the coming years. We welcomed a family of six in late February.

Team MKJG. Date of family arrival – May 26, 2016.

As a small team spread across Toronto, we felt that we were best equipped to assist a smaller family and we were pleased to be matched with a couple whose son lives in Mississauga. He has been an incredible partner to our sponsorship process. We feel honoured to be helping this way and seeing a family reunited. We are very thankful to our donors who made this possible and grateful to welcome the couple at the end of May.

Members of Team Ashoka give a warm welcome to the Edilbi family



Boy holding letters that spell Canada, his new home.



RULSC TEAMS

Through RULSC, many teams came together to dedicate their time, resources and skills to sponsor a family and raise funds for their first 12 months of settlement. The contributions of each and every team member have been central to the success of the program. The teams below are still awaiting families.

FOUNDING TEAMS

Sheldon Levy, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development and past President, Ryerson University “Ryerson students are volunteering their skills and their time to help newly arrived Syrian refugees adjust to life in Canada, with more students joining every day. As has been demonstrated many times, it’s remarkable what can be achieved when caring people share a common goal. I’m proud of the Ryerson community’s leadership in responding to this situation and very pleased to support it.”

Mohamed Lachemi, President and Vice-Chancellor, Ryerson University “The Ryerson Lifeline Syria Challenge represents many of our core values, including community building, social justice, and inclusion, and I am thrilled to be a part of its leadership team. The Challenge is also an incredible opportunity for students to put their knowledge into action and work together to solve real world problems.”

Marsha McEachrane (with Samantha Jackson and Farzin Yousefian) Interim Executive Director, Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic, Ryerson University “Friends and colleagues from the Syrian community have helped me understand why our support is so badly needed at particular moment in time, and why I want to add my contribution to that of others.”

Steven Murphy, Dean, Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University “The Lifeline Syria Challenge embodies the Ted Rogers School of Management’s commitment to being active members of our community and living principles of corporate social responsibility. The response from Commerce students has been overwhelming.”

Marion Mackenzie, President, CGI Canada “I am a proud Canadian and particularly as a woman, I am incredibly grateful and privileged to live in a country as wonderful and plentiful. At this moment in history, I believe it is morally incumbent on me to do what I can, in any small way, to support the men, women and children of Syria.”

ADDITIONAL TEAMS

Salah Bachir, President, Cineplex Media “Being from Lebanon, I have seen the plight of refugees firsthand. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing — for our children to have a bright future, and to make sure they don’t go to bed hungry. It’s that simple.”

Team Amalya “The Syrians fleeing for their lives did not choose violence. They did not want to uproot themselves from their beloved homes or disrupt their children’s lives. We believe that everyone deserves to feel safe and realize his or her full potential.” – Kiyoye Sugiman-Marangos

Mississauga Friends “The picture of Alan Kurdi washed ashore made me realize that citizens of this world have failed. God has blessed me and my family with a great life and unlimited opportunity living as Canadians, and I want to share that experience with others. As an alumnus of Ryerson, I was very encouraged by their response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis.” – Ali Qureshi

Maple & Olives “We all have different experiences of migration, and all of us enjoy the cultural vibrancy of living in Toronto and want to share this gift with others. We want to make the same difference in the lives of Syrians devastated by this senseless civil war.” – Kate Hoffman

Andrea Cohen Barrack and Michael Barrack “Some new Canadians, like our families, had the ability to choose to migrate to Canada for greater economic prosperity. Unfortunately, too many others are forced to flee their homeland because of violence and war. We are so grateful to be able to work with others in the Ryerson community who share our values and our commitment to a fair and just world.”

Anne Harris “Ryerson’s Lifeline Syria Challenge puts the institutional might and substantial people power of Ryerson and Toronto to work for good. In leading a sponsor team, I am especially motivated to honour the memory of my parents, Emily and Grant, who led by example of service and community engagement.”

Westside Refugee Response “Our mission is to give at least one refugee family a safe place to land, be their first friends, help them settle into life in Canada, and in doing so, hopefully encourage others to do the same.” – Elizabeth Bromstein

OCAD University Syrian Refugee Sponsorship Team “We were stunned by the images of refugees struggling to escape a brutal civil war – we wanted to take action. Taking part in the Lifeline Syria Challenge gives us an opportunity to create awareness of the crisis and join forces with others to welcome a family into our diverse and caring society.” – Sarah Diamond, President, OCAD U

Team Osgoode with Greenspan Humphrey Lavine “Osgoode Hall Law School is committed to the pursuit of justice through law. The Osgoode community (faculty, students, staff, and alumni) is embarking on the Lifeline Syria Challenge in order to make a positive difference in the global refugee crisis, and as part of a broader effort to support refugee communities, and the families fleeing conflict and chaos and seeking a new beginning in Canada.” – Lorne Sossin, Dean, Osgoode Hall Law School

“**Ryerson’s Lifeline Syria Challenge puts the institutional might and substantial people power of Ryerson and Toronto to work for good.**”

-Anne Harris

Pay it Forward “Thirty years ago, I came to Canada with my family from Sri Lanka through the family class sponsorship when Sri Lanka was in the midst of a civil war. At the age of 10, I was uprooted to a country where I didn’t know the language and had limited support and resources when we first arrived. I see this initiative as one way for me to ‘pay it forward’ to others.” – Vinitha Gengatharan, Director, International Strategy & Partnerships, University of Toronto

York University Sociologists and Friends “We are frustrated with how wars, profiteering and political posturing are forcing people from their homes, and how our immigration system is stopping them from getting to safety. We say, “refugees are welcome in our communities.” – Lesley Wood

Project Toronto Welcomes “The problem is enormous and the number of people affected is overwhelming, but there is one thing we can do: help a Syrian family make a new home here. The Ryerson Lifeline Syria Challenge is bold and ambitious. It’s inspiring to be part of a collective movement that has generated such momentum and action.” – Frances Bartlett

Seven Sisters “We are all horrified at Syria’s disintegration into civil war and the impact that it has had on the millions of ordinary Syrians forced to flee their homes. We recognize our own good fortune as citizens of Canada, a rich, just society and well established democracy, and want very much to be able to help at least one Syrian family to start a new life here.”

Bloorcourt Sponsors “Coming from diverse backgrounds, most of us didn’t know each other beforehand but very quickly we have come together as determined teammates ready to make a difference for a refugee family. Some of us have stories of refugee experiences in our families, some of us are parents, and all of us are motivated by a deeply Canadian value: refugees welcome.” – Shahin Etemadzadeh

Ontario Labour Arbitrators “We are moved by the plight of Syrian refugees and resolved to help. We chose the Osgoode Hall Law School - York University Lifeline Syria Challenge to put the money we raised to fund the resettlement of one or more Syrian refugee families, and to allow donors to become personally involved.” – William Kaplan on behalf of 50 Ontario Labour Arbitrators

Toronto Friends for Syrian Refugees “We are a group that started out through the Toronto Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and we are committed to bringing a Syrian refugee family to Toronto.” – Eleanor Andrew

Hope in Motion “We are a group of friends who met through the U of T Masters Track Club and joined together to sponsor a Syrian refugee family and single man. We are all deeply moved by this dire crisis and highly motivated to act. At essence our hearts and minds have been touched by the unthinkable hardships of Syrian refugees and profound gratitude for our good life here in Canada.” – Lynn Kobayashi

KPMG Teams Care, Hope and Promise “We are hard at work preparing for the arrival of the sponsored families. We are excited to welcome them to Canada and provide them with the support they need to thrive in our great country!” - Rob Brouwer, Nazir Valani, Mary Lou Maher, Elda Fares, Lian Zerafa, Brad Watson, Bill Thomas

Trinity College in the University of Toronto “The humanitarian crisis in Syria has emphasized the critical role and responsibility we all share as part of the global community. At Trinity College, we have a long-standing tradition of leadership, international engagement and caring for those in need. We are committed to sponsoring at least one Syrian refugee family’s transition and successful resettlement to Canada.” – Provost Mayo Moran

Marhaba Toronto “While the driving forces of the situation are complex, its devastating effects are clear. In order to survive, many Syrian families need to settle elsewhere. Here in Toronto, we recognize that we are among the world’s most fortunate, and we feel we must do what we can to support a family in need.” – Abby Cook

It Takes a Village “We are building a community of compassionate, engaged, and practical people who are ready to support one or more families from Syria to settle and thrive in Toronto. We believe generosity, effort and empathy are powerful agents that will bring us towards a better future.” – Liz Phillips

A Small Group of Citizens “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” (Margaret Mead) – Julie White

Safe Haven “We have been moved to action simply because we feel we have the ability to help - through our community links, our time, and our various skill sets. Many of us have been deeply disturbed at the plight of millions of people and we want to have the chance to help at least one family directly.” – Unaiza Karim

The Kensington Group for Refugee Settlement “30 residents in Kensington Apartments Ltd. matched with a Syrian refugee family of 7 due to arrive in 2016 or early 2017. Our volunteers are researching refugee

support organizations & collecting in-kind donations of household furnishings and funds. Meanwhile, we are assisting settlement of a family of 4 in Toronto, and helping yet another family of 5 in Egypt file an application & secure urgent medical care for one of their daughters. Thank you for your contributions.” – John C. Bryan

“ We believe generosity, effort and empathy are powerful agents that will bring us towards a better future. ”

– Liz Phillips

Project Connect “The unprecedented humanitarian crisis has prompted us, as Canadians and the descendants of immigrants ourselves, to take action and connect with global citizens in need. We embrace the opportunity to introduce a Syrian family to a welcoming Toronto.” – Jeff Galway

Walmer Welcomers “We are a parent-led group affiliated with the Jackman Institute for Child Study. All of us share a sense of responsibility to help others—and a desire to instill this value in our children. We are grateful that there is infrastructure and support in place to help Syrian refugees right now in a direct and tangible way.” – Maggie Fost

Choir! Choir! Choir! “Choir! Choir! Choir! is a passionate and tight-knit group that sings pop songs in three-part harmony every week and has performed at some of Toronto’s biggest venues and festivals. Choir! has shown us that amazing things can happen when people come together.” – Ainsley Goldman

True North “For us, supporting a family is about sharing the good fortune of living in Canada. We’re a group of Toronto professionals and entrepreneurs who are shocked by the human toll of the Syrian crisis and want to

play a small role in alleviating it by helping a family settle into a new life here.” – Robin Cory

Roots to Routes “We are a group committed to effecting positive change to support the sponsorship of Syrian refugees to Canada. By working together to help people in need, we believe that we can make a difference. We believe in the power of community and collective effort.” – Lanna MacKay

Readers without Borders “We are members and friends of a book club who have met over many years to learn about the world through literature. Some of us have parents and grandparents who had to flee their homes. We have an interest in social justice and wish to welcome refugees to become part of our community.” – Yvette Matyas

Zohran Kwame Mamdani “I realize that one can always affect change in the world by beginning at home. By helping better settle refugees, we are ensuring that these people - whose futures were so cruelly taken away from them - can begin to dream, hope, and live again.”

A Hope 4 Humanity “We will lay the foundations of renewed hope in establishing and integrating our sponsored family into our rich Canadian mosaic. We will nurture our newly arrived friends and ensure they are able to quickly and successfully adapt, integrate and contribute towards a positive future into their new home.” – Mohamed Khattab

Guiding Hearts “Many of our ancestors were immigrants and we wouldn’t be able to enjoy the benefits of living in Canada today if they weren’t welcomed into Canada with open arms. We believe that no religious, cultural or racial group should be forced from their homeland.” – Gayle Akler

New Roots Refugee Support “By a stroke of luck, we were born in Canada and not into a desperate situation. We are a group of concerned Toronto families who are determined to try to redistribute that luck by welcoming a Syrian refugee family to our city and our lives. We see this as a way to lead by example and create a powerful lesson about social responsibility for the next generation.” – Valery Woloshyn

Together We Grow “Our diverse group was formed through the common goal of wanting to respond to the humanitarian crisis affecting millions of people in the world. We are proud to include many University of Toronto alumnae as well as group members who, through personal experiences, understand the challenges that newcomers to Canada experience.” – Devon Klaas

Brock Sponsors Refugees “As a group of employees at Brock University, we are excited to be part of RULSC. The humanitarian crisis that is affecting Syrian and other refugees worldwide demands a collective response at many scales. By joining together, we are able to offer much more than we could individually.” – Ebru Ustundag

AMPD for Syria (School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design at York University) “As the circumstances for Syrians continue to deteriorate, together we can provide an opportunity for hope and resilience to flourish. AMPD for Syria is a powerful opportunity to give hope to a family that has been uprooted from their existence.” – Amy Stewart

Team Full Circle “As a former Vietnamese refugee 35 years ago, I see my participation in RULSC as my way turn to give back and provide a family from Syria with the same opportunity that was afforded to me. Our team represents what this great country is about: an ethnically diverse mosaic committed to doing the right thing.” – Minh Ton

The Torontoism Team “We are very proud of everything Canada has done for us, and that it is now offering the same support to Syrian refugees. We welcome them, realizing that, as our forefathers experienced, there is a need for the community to pull together and assist in their resettlement.” – Richard Silver

York University Team Health “The Faculty of Health is committed to keeping people healthier, longer. For Syrian refugees, that starts with a new home, safe from conflict and opportunity for the future. We are committed to providing not only financial support but also the talents of faculty, students and staff who volunteer to join Team Health to ease the transition of a family to a new and healthy life in Canada.” – Harvey A. Skinner, Founding Dean, Faculty of Health

Friends of the National Yacht Club “We are a diverse group of sailing enthusiasts in the GTA comprising multiple nationalities and cultures. Our membership includes “previously welcomed refugees” to Canada, as well as immigrants from all over the world and descendants of previous immigrants. We are proud to be associated with Ryerson as well as to have many graduate and teaching faculty in our membership.” – Tom Stephens

Massey Refugee Support Initiative “In response to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, the Massey College community has come together to help with providing resettlement opportunities for refugees. Our group spans all levels of the broader Massey community, including staff, Junior Fellows, Journalism Fellows, Senior Fellows, members of the Quadrangle Society, and Alumni of the College.” – Kiran Banerjee

“**The humanitarian crisis that is affecting Syrian and other refugees worldwide demands a collective response at many scales. By joining together, we are able to offer much more than we could individually.**”

– Ebru Ustundag

Refugee Response Stirling “We are a group rallying the community of Stirling-Rawdon. Multiple members of our group have sponsored refugees during the South-East Asian refugee crisis of the 70s. We acknowledge that Canada is a country of refugees and immigrants. We’re proud of the Canadian response to this crisis and feel inspired to make a contribution. We are grateful to RULSC for providing the leadership to help shape and direct our efforts.” – Kerry Shudall

York University Music and Friends “The faculty, staff and students of the Music Department at York University, along with our families and many friends, are committed to welcoming a Syrian family to Toronto, and helping them to thrive. Our group is small, but diverse and dedicated, and drawn together by a need to respond to fellow mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers in crisis.”
– Sherry Johnson

Marhaba Committee “Marhaba means “welcome” in Arabic, and this is what we want to offer to a Syrian family settling in Toronto. We may not be able to stop the conflict in Syria, but we can do our best to assist a family in starting a new life in Canada and renewing hope for their children.” – Robert Brodey

Salvus Settlement Project “We are a group of citizens, hoping we can do something small to affect this situation. Salvus means “safe and sound” in Latin. Canada, with its exceptional tolerance and generosity, is a model for the world. As someone once did for all of us, we want to welcome those who are looking for a better life to this country, of which we are so proud.” – Saleem Kassam

Toronto Educators for the Refugee Child “Thirty years ago, I left Iran carrying in my arms nothing but my three-year-old daughter. My daughter and I grew personally and professionally, and succeeded against all odds. I’m now supporting a family as a tribute to my late daughter who passed away a decade ago, and all refugee children who seek better lives of hope, peace and security.” – Adele Rezai

Friends of Music and Arts “A group of musicians and music lovers, artists and art lovers, friends and family, we are responding to what we believe is the most significant refugee crisis of our time by pooling our resources to help a family in need. We recognize that Canada is enriched by the people who emigrate here.” – Angela Rudden

Ziad Omar “Sponsoring a family was our family’s way of paying it forward. We have enjoyed amazing privileges living in this great country, and extending

them to another family was the right thing to do. And when the opportunity presented itself to help out, we never hesitated. Thank you Lifeline Syria and Ryerson for making this opportunity possible.”

Life Changers “Our core members are friends and family who have enjoyed rich personal lives and rewarding professional careers. We intend to welcome and support a refugee family, empowering them to once again have hopes and dreams, changing their lives and ours as we share a land that has been good to us.” – Elizabeth Mitchell

“**Canada is a world leader in the private sponsorship of refugees and an inspiring example of the power and impact that local communities can have when they mobilize their skills, resources, and compassion.**”

– Tamara Sabarini

CaseWare Syrian Sponsorship Group “After an initial fundraising campaign, supporting UNHCR’s efforts targeting the Syrian refugee crisis, a group of us at CaseWare thought: should we not be doing more? By assembling the CaseWare Syrian Sponsorship Group, and working with RULSC, we raised \$30K and are now waiting to welcome two Syrian refugees with whom we have been matched.” – Alnoor Ebrahim

Helping Hands “We are a diverse group of immigrants in Mississauga and many of us have had to flee war and destruction, seeking refuge. We know all too well the despair of having to leave behind your loved ones and country of birth for an unknown future. We are passionate about helping others in the same situation and

we feel the need to act now. Together, we can help give hope to one family at a time.” – Baida Ghasemi

Seneca College – School of Arts and Science “We have come together to do this because the world is large, and our sphere of influence is small. All of our families were immigrants, and some were refugees. We hope for a world where people are not dying in open boats as they flee their homes or languishing for years in refugee camps.” – Melissa Blackie

Safety is a Human Right “Coming face to face with the human cost of war can feel overwhelming. We want to help, but we don’t always know how. This program offers us the opportunity to respond on a human level in a tangible way by helping to facilitate the journey of a family who made the courageous decision to resettle across the world.”

Junction Families for Syrian Families “We are a group of U of T alumni, parents, grandparents and recent immigrants that have travelled widely. We recognize how fortunate we are to raise our families in Canada. Like you, we want to play our part in building a just, equitable and peaceful world.” – Avril Bundale

Swords into Ploughshares “We are a group of friends from diverse backgrounds who support and welcome those from war zones. We wish to provide the community support and sponsorship needed to build a life as our grandparents and parents have done themselves, and to help refugees as they learn to call Canada ‘home’.” – Janey Law

Team TSKM “Canada is a world leader in the private sponsorship of refugees and an inspiring example of the power and impact that local communities can have when they mobilize their skills, resources, and compassion. We are proud to have the opportunity to be a part of RULSC.” – Tamara Sabarini

Call Canada Home “We are a mission-driven group composed of people with diverse backgrounds and expertise determined to make a difference. We have come together for a common goal: to bring a Syrian family to safety in Toronto and support the transition into their new home in Canada.” – Sarita Kassar

Arts & Medicine “We are a group of strangers, colleagues, friends and family who have joined together with one singular pledge and that is to do what we can to help with the Syrian humanitarian crisis. We are very excited to be part of the Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge.” – Dr. Jill Hamilton

Dalla Lana School of Public Health “We believe no field touches the human experience more than public health. With a dedicated team made up of current and former faculty, staff, students and alumni, we have come together to welcome a family of Syrian refugees to Canada.”

The Glendon Collective “We are a group of scholars and activists committed to justice and to fostering welcoming environments for intercultural contact and collaboration. Individually and as a group, we welcome the opportunity to participate in helping a family settle in Toronto and join our community. We have come together to support them as they make this city their home.” – María Constanza Guzmán

York University Team Math and Stats “We are a group of friends with connections to the Mathematics and Statistics department at York University. Many of us are immigrants to Canada ourselves and feel especially grateful for the quality of life that we have here. The urgency of this crisis has encouraged us to act to sponsor a family.” – Mike Zabrocki

Scholars Give Sanctuary “We are a group of 30 retired professors, librarians, partners and Geography and Planning students at the University of Toronto. The recent Syrian crisis has motivated us to turn this concern into action and do something practical to help. Some of our group have been refugees themselves; some have housed refugees from earlier periods; others have studied refugee problems; and others, having experience and expertise in various organizations, believe they can bring their talents to bear on refugee settlement issues in the Toronto area.” – Joe Whitney

Students for Syrian Refugees “We are Social Science students at York University, assisted by faculty and community members. Most of us are recent immigrants ourselves. Our third-year experiential education course, Work for a Change, is designed to teach us strategic

organizing, research and communications skills. We want to use our new skills to help others find safety and security in Canada.” – David Langille

“**Many of us are immigrants to Canada ourselves and feel especially grateful for the quality of life that we have here. The urgency of this crisis has encouraged us to act to sponsor a family.**

– Mike Zabrocki

Team Kismet “In many languages the word “Kismet” means destiny. Our team members’ Kismet brought our parents and us to Canada, and we hope to share this good fortune with individuals who have been displaced due to the crisis in Syria. Thank you to our donors for your generosity.” – Sophia Javed

Downtown Sponsors “Though members of our group come from different walks of life and are of different ages and backgrounds, we are united by certain shared principles. Everyone in the group believes in the importance and effectiveness of collective action in overcoming difficulties and achieving objectives, especially large-scale ones.” – Kiva Reardon

Project Gratitude “We are grateful for the opportunity and privilege to offer refuge and safe haven for a Syrian family. As a group of over 15 Torontonians, with support from the Faculty of Environmental Studies, through Prof. Sarah Flicker and students, we are ready for this transformational experience of sponsoring a refugee family and committed to supporting their settlement process.” – Sarah Flicker

High Park Refugee Sponsorship Group “We are a group of neighbours and friends who share a common concern for the refugee crisis that has unfolded in Syria. As Canadians, most of us don’t have to look too far back in our history to find our own family’s immigration stories and we recognize how incredibly fortunate we are to live in a country as wonderful and welcoming as Canada.” – Ruth Calman

Baby Point Helps “Baby Point Helps is a group of neighbours in the Baby Point area of Toronto working together to support the settlement of a refugee family in Canada. Having the good fortune of raising our own families in a safe and fulfilling environment, we recognize our responsibility to share that with others who are less fortunate.” – Trevor Bain

Oxley Edition Led by Katherine Rawlinson

LEARNING BY DOING



Enactus Ryerson student volunteers holding one of their popular financial literacy workshops

Ryerson takes pride in its mission “to meet societal needs”. Not only is RULSC making a difference in the lives of Syrian refugees and their sponsors, but it is providing an unparalleled experience for students. Volunteers from across the four universities have applied their knowledge, skills and passion to solving real world problems. Student volunteers are at the very core of RULSC and have joined the effort in droves.

RULSC created a broad set of committees to address areas of resettlement, including Translation and Interpretation, Housing, Health and Wellness, Settlement, Finance, and Civic Engagement. All the resources created by the volunteers are now housed on an online portal that was launched in early 2016. Every sponsorship team has access to the portal to help support them throughout the settlement process.



RULSC Welcome Binders are provided to each sponsorship team

Ryerson students are also assigned to sponsorship teams and are integrated as team members to learn about resettlement through first-hand experience. They help prepare for the refugee family's arrival and assist them in adjusting to life in Canada. For example, students help search for appropriate housing for the family, look for settlement resources, and act as a liaison between the team and RULSC staff. Once the family has arrived, they meet the newcomers at the airport, help the family enroll in school, find services in their neighborhood, help the family apply for government services, and provide orientation to Canadian systems like transit, banking and employment. We have even seen some volunteers offer a few hours of child care! RULSC provides students with important learning opportunities while creating lasting connections between students, community members, and newcomers to Canada that may not have otherwise occurred.

"It's such a great and unforgettable experience so far, it makes me happy to see how happy the families are to be safe and to see their kids going to school again!" - Zena Salem, assigned student team member volunteer of Team Everest

Responding to the emerging needs of the families who have arrived, Ryerson recently launched student volunteer opportunities in the areas of English as a Second Language, Employment, Peer Mentoring and Education/Early Years. With the support of faculty and staff advisors, programming will be running through the year, connecting Syrian newcomers to knowledge, information and resources which will help them in their settlement experience. We are also grateful to CodeRedTO, a volunteer-led transit advocacy group in the GTA that provided funds to cover some public transportation costs to make our events accessible to Syrian newcomers.

"As an Alum and now staff member at the university, I am always looking for ways to give back to the community that has fostered my development as both a student and professional. RULSC has provided me with an opportunity to contribute to the creation of a space for Syrian families to share stories and grow as part of the Ryerson community; the very things that I appreciate most about the university." - Kaitlyn Taylor-Asquini, Peer Mentoring Staff Advisor

RULSC staff also saw an opportunity to connect the newcomer women to each other and to the broader community on issues unique to their needs such as health, social integration, employment and childcare. A women's group was launched in mid-June of this year to create a sustainable network of women who can lean on each other and community experts for social, emotional, and practical support as they settle in their new communities.

Here are some highlights of how students from all four universities have mobilized their time, energy and skills to drive meaningful impact through RULSC.

- RULSC Welcome Binders have garnered a reputation of their own. They were assembled by many volunteers who translated into Arabic important basic information about Canada and how to access essential services. The binder includes an arrival letter to introduce the sponsors, emergency contact info,

and healthcare information in English and Arabic. The binders became coveted resources, sought after by teams outside of RULSC.

- Through their own initiative, various on-campus student groups and societies came together in support of RULSC. In October 2015, the Students for Syria charity dinner was an overwhelming success, raising more than \$16,000 in one night with the help of student groups and the Ryerson community.

“My friends Anuja, Banin, Leyan, Obaid and I organized a charity dinner together for RULSC by collaborating with over 15 student groups and societies. There was an unspoken understanding that this was something we all should contribute to, in any way that we can, and it’s an honour for me to be part of it.” – Radwan Al-Nachawati, President Muslim Students Association, RULSC volunteer

- In February 2016, the York University Libraries joined the MOSAIC institute to host a four-day awareness-building and fundraising event, 4Days4Syria. The event raised over \$2,500 and featured a photography exhibit, guest speakers, spoken word poets, a marketplace and silent auction.



4Days4Syria event, hosted at York University

- In May 2016, a dedicated group of Master of Immigration and Settlement Studies students at Ryerson hosted an incredible evening with performances from the Carnatic Arts community, featuring talented dancers and musicians. The event raised over \$13,000 and gathered a crowd of 400 people, including: MP for Scarborough–Rouge Park, Mr. Gary Anandasangaree; MP for Ajax, Mr. Mark Holland; and even the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Honourable John McCallum.

“Seeing the work of [RULSC] and what they are doing to help the community, we thought that as university students and members of the Carnatic arts community, we could do something to support this initiative, helping this group of future Canadians in their resettlement process.” – Archana Sivakumaran, Immigration and Settlement Studies Master of Arts student, Lead organizer of Sangeetham for Syria

- The Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science at Ryerson and the Ryerson History Society also held their own events, amongst many other faculty and student groups across all the collaborating universities, to build awareness and raise funds in support of RULSC.



Ryerson students and members of the Carnatic Arts community gather with Minister McCallum and local MPs at “Sangeetham for Syria”

- Over 100 volunteers strong, the Interpretation and Translation committee is made up of students from Ryerson, University of Toronto, and York University, as well as other community members who speak and read Arabic and support the sponsorship teams. MCIS Language Services volunteered their time to hold a workshop for our student volunteers to provide an overview of the standards of practice and code of ethics for interpreters.

“The experience of helping refugees through providing phone interpretation has been extremely rewarding, to say the least. I have not only come away with better interpretation skills but, more importantly, I have been able to facilitate the communication between newly arrived Syrians and their sponsors, shattering the language barrier. I’m truly glad to have stepped up to the Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge.” – Layla Al Zayat, Interpretation and Translation Committee volunteer

- In early April, the Ryerson Rams Women's Basketball team, supported by Ryerson Vice-Provost, Students, Heather Lane Vetere, volunteered to host a free Family Fun Day for Syrian newcomer families. The day's activities included soccer, basketball, a craft table, face painting, pizza, and even an appearance by Eggy, Ryerson's official mascot. Eight families and 25 children enjoyed the day's activities.
- Enactus Ryerson, a student group that encourages entrepreneurial action in the community, has created financial literacy workshops, with 70 newcomers attending their first session to learn the basics of Canadian currency and budgeting. A second session provided Syrian newcomers with important information on the nuances of banking in Canada. Mohanad Hekal explained the differences between various types of bank accounts, online banking and other topics.



Meeting Eggy for the first time at the Family Fun Day



Friends supporting the Students for Syria charity dinner



- York University joined the RULSC collaboration as part of its Syria Response and Refugee Initiative. With its academic leadership in the areas of refugee and migration, York has taken a multi-pronged approach in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. In addition to sponsoring families, York will expand and enhance its support for World University Service of Canada-sponsored and non-sponsored student refugees. York will increase refugee sponsorship from one to five refugees per year, providing four-year tuition waivers for each student — one of which will be for a graduate student each year.
- Many York student groups are participating in an Amnesty International Canada and Canadian Council for Refugees "Refugees Welcome Here!" campaign as part of York's Syria Response and Refugee Initiative.

- York's Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS) has been recognized as an international leader in the creation, mobilization, and dissemination of new knowledge that addresses forced migration issues in local, national and global contexts. The Refugee Sponsorship Support Program (RSSP) course at York University matched 16 Osgoode law students with Toronto-based pro-bono lawyers to provide volunteer legal support to assist sponsors in completing their paperwork. The combination of practical and academic experiences has created a unique opportunity for lasting and meaningful impact for the private sponsorship community.



Pierre-André Thériault with dedicated law students from the RSSP

“Working with RULSC has been an enriching experience for myself and for the many law students who have volunteered to provide legal support to refugee sponsors as they navigate the complex refugee system. Hats off to all involved!” - Pierre-André Thériault, Refugee SSP Research Instructor - Osgoode Hall Law School course co-instructor, and York University Project Lead for RULSC

- The University of Toronto is a core contributor to the collective action taken to support the resettlement of Syrian newcomers in the GTA. Supporting over 20 cases through RULSC sponsorship teams, the University has been able to mobilize their community towards impact.
- In addition to fundraising and sponsoring families, the University of Toronto has made a host of valuable services available. For example, it made its summer camp opportunities available free of charge for newcomers.
- The U of T Dental Refugee Clinic offers services to those in need, and students also assembled school supply kits for newcomer children in the community.

- U of T students from the Near and Middle Eastern Civilization Cultural Exchange and Support Initiative continue to provide language and cultural competency support to teams.
- In addition to the ongoing research and education related to refugee issues, as part of their broader initiative to support the humanitarian crisis in Syria, U of T expanded their Scholars-at-Risk program with a new bursary for students at risk.
- The U of T World University Service of Canada (WUSC) chapter sponsored an additional student from Syria. Furthermore, they drove advocacy and access to healthcare for newcomers through the impactful work of the Crossroads Clinic, Toronto's first hospital-based refugee health clinic.
- As a collaborative and creative force in the region, OCAD University supported the universities in coming together to shape what has become a successful model of social innovation. OCAD U kicked off its RULSC campaign on November 27, 2015 with a community event featuring a silent auction of artwork donated by OCAD faculty and students, as well as music, food, speakers and stories. The kickoff involved 20 volunteers and attracted over 100 members of the community to raise funds and awareness of the Syrian refugee crisis.
- Nabil Harfoush, an OCAD U faculty member from Syria, Martin Ginsherman, designated representative for the Immigration and Refugee Board, and Pablo Munoz, an OCAD U student who came to Canada as a refugee himself, spoke passionately about their own experiences and the need to mobilize our community to support Syrian refugees.
- This event, combined with individual online donations and donations at OCAD U's annual staff holiday party, helped Team OCAD U raise the funds necessary to be matched with a Syrian family.

Deanne Fisher addressing the crowd at OCAD U's launch



In efforts to connect our teams, and to grow the knowledge and resources amongst them, RULSC organizes regular meet-and-greets and invites guest speakers with expertise on topics relevant to newcomer settlement. We have explored topics such as Syrian culture, housing, well-being, youth and language. We also invited sponsors to share their experiences and lessons learned for the benefit of the other sponsors. We have been fortunate to have the participation of the Arab Community Centre of Toronto, WoodGreen Community Services, York Psychology Graduate Students Refugee Education Initiatives, Jayu, Crossroads Clinic, and many others to provide knowledge and resources to our sponsors.

In May 2016, Ryerson hosted a job fair to support Paramount Fine Foods' initiative to provide 100 Syrian newcomers with employment opportunities at their restaurant locations across Ontario. As the fastest growing Middle Eastern restaurant chain in Canada, Mohamad Fakih, CEO of Paramount Fine Foods, saw an opportunity to 'pay it forward'. More than 100 Syrian newcomers attended and were assisted in applying to a variety of entry-level positions at Paramount across Ontario. Just weeks after the event, some of the newcomers have been hired and will be starting work shortly. A dozen student volunteers, many of them Arabic speaking, spent their Saturday morning welcoming the newcomers to the event, helping attendees fill out the application form, and assisting with event logistics. Following the job fair, Ryerson student volunteers were engaged to connect with job applicants to support them with interview preparation, resume-building, and in building their profiles on Magnet's online job-matching tool.

Volunteers, sponsors and staff get to know each other at RULSC's first meet and greet



TOP: Julie Hamada from Paramount Fine Foods addresses the newcomers at the Paramount job fair
 BOTTOM: Student volunteers assist newcomers fill out their employment applications at the Paramount job fair

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

Toronto
The Star checks in with a young couple we first met in Jordan in October, when their son was battling leukemia.

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What it's like to live on a Syrian
refugee's stipend

BY ALI AHMADI | MARCH 29, 2016 AT 1:13 PM

Once the tearful photo-ops are over, newly arrived Syrian refugees face making a life in Canada. It's not a leisurely process: the vast majority need English, integrate into a new culture and acquire the skills necessary to st

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Publié le 04 septembre 2015 à 09:00 | Mis à jour le 04 septembre 2015 à 09:08

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Just married! Samantha and Farzin pose for photos outside of City Hall

Samantha Jackson, Ryerson alumni and the first volunteer coordinator of RULSC and her fiancé Farzin Yousefian, Osgoode Hall alumni, cancelled their planned wedding and instead chose to hold a fundraiser wedding reception to support the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Toronto. Subsequent to media exposure, they raised over \$60,000 and are now part of a sponsorship team. “We feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to fundraise with our family and friends,” said Jackson. People from across the country were incredibly generous, “with every donation sending a clear message: refugees are welcome here.”

OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

OUR DONORS

RULSC has engaged over 6,000 donors and has raised over \$4.5 million since the program was launched. The sponsors and the families that they are supporting are grateful for your contributions.

RULSC would also like to acknowledge that the sponsorship of over 20 families was made possible by the generous individual contributions of two donors, Sajjad Ebrahim and Moez Kassam.

“I have had the good fortune to come to Canada 39 years ago and got into business and by the grace of God was successful,” said Mr. Ebrahim “Canada presented me the opportunity to succeed and I would really like to help others become successful in Canada. I have had the good fortune with friends to support Vietnamese, Ethiopian and Bosnian Refugees in the past, however in the case of Syrians, their plight is heart rending, and I feel blessed that I can help them, especially families with special needs.”

“The human tragedy coming out of Syria implores all of us to do whatever we can to address the suffering of the victims,” added Mr. Kassam “I hope I can continue to support RULSC and other like-minded organizations who are working tirelessly to address the needs of the most vulnerable. We must all do more.”

Thank you on behalf of the sponsorship teams and the families that you have supported.



Sajjad Ebrahim



Moez Kassam

OUR PARTNERS & CONTRIBUTORS

The Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Challenge would also like to acknowledge the leadership and staff of the following organizations that have been a part of the program's success.



The inspiration for Ryerson's response to the humanitarian crisis, Lifeline Syria was early to mobilize private sponsors and community members to refer their friends and families.



Through the Office of the Refugees of the Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT), many of RULSC's teams were successfully matched with Syrian refugees, many of whom have now arrived and are settling in Canada.



Experiencing rapid growth of its restaurant franchise, and recognizing the need to fill jobs, Paramount was quick to respond to the employment needs of the newcomer families by partnering with RULSC to help provide job opportunities to Syrian newcomers.



Magnet has shared its leadership and expertise in connecting Syrian newcomers to employment opportunities through its job matching platform.

Thank you to the United Church of Canada and Christie Refugee Welcome Centre for their efforts in submitting cases on behalf of RULSC's sponsoring teams.

Lastly, thank you to all contributors of this report – sponsors, donors, staff at the universities, writers, designers – who provided quotes and pictures to help tell the story of RULSC.

RULSC LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

Ryerson University

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