

# Church-sponsored refugee family arrives in Rothesay

COLIN MCPHAIL  
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

**QUISPAMIS** • The 10th Syrian refugee family privately sponsored through parishes of the Diocese of Saint John has arrived in New Brunswick.

Jean MacDonald and her committee from St. Mark's Catholic Church greeted a family of six Thursday evening in a touching meeting at the Saint John Airport.

"It was emotional. The mother was crying. She was very emotional," said MacDonald, the co-ordinator of sponsoring campaign at the Quispamis-based church.

"They were so appreciative and said, 'We love you so much for doing this.' It was like they couldn't thank us enough."

The mother and father and their four boys, aged 11, 8, 6, and almost 2, are at home in their new apartment in Rothesay, she said, as the preparation time ends and the parish's dozens of volunteers begin working with the family in hopes of creating a smooth transition into Canadian society.

The parish set up committees to aid the family in just about every aspect of life, from banking to recreation, schooling to shopping.

The family was sponsored through the federal Blended Visa Office-Referred Program, which matches refugees slated for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency with private Canadian sponsors.

The program mandates the sponsor provide a year of social and emotional, according to the Government of Canada website.

MacDonald said that involves taking care of medical needs, setting up the family's finances, arranging school enrolment and language training, among other areas.

She said a local doctor and dentist have already offered their time to support for the newcomers. The refugees are also covered under the Interim Federal Health program for a year in addition to provincial health coverage, according to the government.

The program also stipulates the federal government and private sponsors both provide six months' worth



The Syrian refugee family sponsored through a St. Mark's Catholic Church initiative spearheaded by Jean MacDonald has arrived.

PHOTO: COLIN MCPHAIL/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

of financial support. In this case, the family will receive \$32,000 – \$16,000 of which will come from St. Mark's.

MacDonald said they will have more than enough to cover the expenses after "overwhelming" support from the parish. Her group approached the members to donate or offer support in any way they can last fall.

"I was hoping for 40 people, but we initially got 100 people and now we have 150 people," she said.

"It was overwhelming. I'm still getting calls for people wanting to participate."

Many of the 150 pledged \$20 a month, or \$240 over the next year, while other donated various items, including furniture and appliances. MacDonald said they only major purchases for the church was one mattress and a sofa.

She said spearheaded the initiative after a media storm brought awareness to the Syrian refugee crisis last year.

"Everyone felt so helpless," she said. "I just felt that everyone wanted to do something but they didn't know how to go about it."

Once the refugee committee was formed they used the Sponsorship Agreement Holders status of the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth to expedite the process. The status means the archdiocese is an already approved

organization by the federal government to support refugees as they resettle in the country.

MacDonald, in fact, was among a group that sponsored a Vietnamese refugee family who still lives in the area nearly four decades later.

Upon the family's arrival, the Diocese of Saint John, a sprawling organization that encompasses parishes in the Saint John, Fredericton and Miramichi areas, will help support and facilitate the work of sponsors.

Leticia Adair, co-ordinator of the refugee support centre at the diocese, said they rely on community-based programs to serve the newcomers, especially the language education and employment counselling courses offered by the YMCA of Greater Saint John.

The now Rothesay-based family is the 10th parish-sponsored family in the diocese's region, she said, a number they hope to grow later this year.

She said she was "heartened" to see the support shown the churches, adding, however, there remains many other from different nationalities that need their support.

"There are also people from other nationalities that have been waiting many, many years to be sponsored," Adair said. "It's something to be aware of ... just because this group of people needs support, they're not only ones."

## Flooding not a concern: developer

TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

**SAINT JOHN** • The developer behind a proposed shopping development off Ashburn Lake Road, who are calling for several changes to the municipal plan, say flooding won't be an issue.

A proposal for a new shopping area to be called The Crossing is to come before council on Monday with a request to amend the municipal plan and rezone 180 acres of land off Ashburn Road near the Rothesay Avenue exit.

"This development has great potential to help deal with storm-water issues in the area significantly beyond the development's needs," said developer Troy Northrup in a press release Sunday evening. Northrup, owner of the East Point Shopping development, is behind the proposal, to be developed by separate company called Horizon Management Ltd.

The land along the north side of Highway One drains under the highway into Marsh Creek.

Documents provided to council say a study by WSP Canada Inc., formerly Terrain Group Inc., found that the development would eliminate approximately 17,000 cubic meters of flood storage, but identifies a way of creating 400,000 cubic metres of rain-water storage as part of the project.

The engineering consultants, who completed a hydrology and hydraulic report for the proposed site, also identified potential for an additional 125,000 cubic meters of flood-plain storage on city lands on the opposite side of Marsh Creek.

"We look forward to working with the City of Saint John and other authorities to develop ways to improve and manage the local watershed, not only for our project, but also to help improve the current local problems in the flood-plain areas," said Northrup.

## Man giving away free computers quits job to focus on 'bigger picture'

REBECCA WATSON  
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

**SAINT JOHN** • Kenny Allan, the Saint John man giving away computers for free, has started taking his idea to the next level.

"I even gave my two weeks (notice) at Sobey's so I can focus on it," he said in an interview Saturday.

The west-sider has been fixing broken computers and giving them away to families with children who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford one.

He gave away nine computers before Christmas and since then another three, but is dreaming of something a lot bigger, said Allan.

"Ideally I would love to get sponsors," he said. "I could do so much more with some backing."

His ultimate dream is to have his idea of refurbishing computers for impoverished children become a large charitable organization that helps children all around the world.

It's not that far fetched, considering he's already had interest from people in California and the Philippines, he said.

"I'm obviously not in the financial position to ship computers to California," he said, adding he told the families he would if they would pay for the shipping. "I just don't think that it would be worth it to ship a modem and monitor, but maybe a laptop."

In an effort to try and drum up more materials and funding to buy computer parts, Allan started an auction Facebook page two weeks ago called charity pc and electronics auction.

So far he has auctioned two donated t-shirts for \$20 each and is selling two of his own personal computers – a Dell computer monitor, keyboard and hard drive for \$60, and a like-new Acer

laptop for \$200.

"I'm not trying to get rich from this," he said. "It all goes back into giving more computers away."

Part of Allan's dream has him opening a computer repair store that would double as a charity.

People would pay to have their technology fixed but a portion of that would be used to go back into fixing computers to give away, he said.

"Like other charities, I would make enough to pay the bills but put everything else back into it," he said.

The ambitious I.T. technician has also started a crowd-sourcing campaign on GoFundMe hoping to raise \$20,000 in seven months.

With the money, he would buy bulk orders of laptops, computers and upgrades off eBay, have the ability to ship computers to those in need in other countries and, hopefully set up a shop in a small location in Saint John to increase production, he said.

"I've never done anything like this before," he said, "I don't know how all this works really, I just know it's something I want to do."

"I can continue on my own with a donated computer here and there but you can only do so much with limited funds."

He continues to take donations locally and said he is dropping off a computer to someone Monday.

"But if this (crowd-sourcing) works out, I would become a registered charity," he said.

In the meantime, Allan says he will pick up odd jobs to help with finances at home but is not at all going to miss working late night shifts at the grocery store.

"I guess I would just like to see that I left something behind in life that made a difference," he said. "Go big or go home."

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**Julia Rogers**

For Julia Rogers, life is all about the journey. Living in constant motion, she made the incredible decision to take a summer and hike 4,200 km's along the Pacific Crest Trail. Stretching from along the Western coast of the US, the hike would take her from the Mexican Border in California, all the way into Canada through deserts, mountains, and forests. A marathon trek that took 133 days total. Julia completed the journey this past summer.



**Jason Reindl**

Jason's resume would be extremely impressive for someone twice his age. Currently Jason is the Head Coach of UNB Track and Field, High Performance Coach for the province, Club Coach for the Saint John Track Club and Head Coach for Canada Games 2017. A transplant from Saskatchewan, Jason prides himself on helping his athletes excel on a national level and perform to their best when competing against the best of the best.



**JQ Smith**

Upon moving to Saint John JQ knew she wanted to be involved in the local community and used what came naturally, dance and choreography. JQ has found her calling with the Saint John Theater Company and has aided them in choreography with performers of all ages. Along with being extremely involved with the Theater Company, JQ has helped establish the Fundy Fringe Fest as volunteer coordinator.

For tickets please visit:

