



Christchurch Newsletter February 2009

The team at Refugee Services has returned to work in 2009 revitalised after a welcome holiday break. With eight Bhutanese families scheduled to arrive on the 27th February we welcome to Refugee Services the 35 volunteers in the current Volunteer Training course who will be working with this intake.

It is a pleasure to work with a large group of people committed to making a difference in the lives of a refugee family. We note that increasing numbers of migrants are joining our volunteer programme and in this present course we have 40% migrants training to work with a family. They have settled in New Zealand by choice so a more structured resettlement than the refugee faces but none the less they have some understanding of culture shock and the resettlement process, valued skills in this work.

The Bhutanese community looks forward to the arrival of another eight families and they are planning a welcome meal for them. Six of the families have relations already living in Christchurch so a lot of excitement as the arrival date is just a few weeks away.

In the March intake, arriving in Christchurch on the 24th April, we expect to receive at least four more Bhutanese families so it is good to see this small community growing.

Another volunteer training course will begin in the third week of March so spread the word to friends and family. We are always in need of new people. The training dates will be on our website in the next week. A big thank you as always to the volunteers who return to assist a 'new' family. Your experience and support enhances the resettlement process both for the refugee family and the volunteers working with their first family.

Anne-Marie Reynolds. Regional Coordinator, South Island.

In Loving Memory of Rafaa Antoun



It is with great sadness that we farewell our wonderful friend and colleague, Rafaa Antoun. Rafaa worked for numerous organizations including the Interfaith Council, the Ethnic Council and the Refugee and Migrant Centre. Rafaa arrived from Egypt in 2000 and she worked tirelessly with people from all cultures and religions. It was her vision to have an interfaith council and this vision was made a reality in 2007. We will miss Rafaa's input and her smiling face, - her legacy will live on through the work she has done and we will remember her for the amazing and very giving woman that she was. Rafaa passed away at the beginning of January.

Upcoming Intakes

If you are an experienced volunteer keen to work with another family, we would love to hear from you. We will be getting an intake in April.

If anyone is interested in helping Christchurch Resettlement Services (CRS) transport young women to Swimming classes on a Saturday evening, could they please contact Jo at CRS phone: 335 0311

NEW APPOINTMENT

Mike Bare' started working with Refugee Services as a supervisor in October 2008. Mike has extensive experience in working with people from other cultures and has been a volunteer himself for approximately ten years. It is great to have him working with us in the supervisor's role.



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to volunteer, Natasha Barnes who has received a Quest for Excellence Scholarship from the National Foundation for the Deaf. Natasha has gained an Honours degree in diplomacy and international relations and is now studying for a Master of Arts in political science. Her

scholarship will help to fund a research trip to interview policy makers in Canada, Japan and Norway.

Past events

Volunteer Christmas function

Approximately sixty volunteers attended the end of year function, which included a meal, farewell to Arch Clarke, awarding of certificates, spot prizes and a very enjoyable quiz. It was a lovely evening and a great opportunity for a catch-up.

Children's Christmas Party:

There was a great turnout of refugee children for the Christmas party held on the 28th November. Santa was in his Southern Hemisphere suit, which consisted of jacket, shorts and gumboots (the elves had lost his trousers!). The kids had a great time and enjoyed receiving a gift each from Santa. Thanks to Melissa for this great idea, which we hope will be a regular event each Christmas.

Swimming lessons for Refugee children

Thanks to donations from Hillview Christian School and Casebrook School, ten young people were able to access subsidized swimming lessons during the school holidays. Given the number of drownings that occur in New Zealand and the inability of many newly arrived children to swim, we see this as a really beneficial programme. We received great feedback and if we can get sponsorship would like to see lessons offered to children in each new intake.

Upcoming meetings/ functions

The next Refugee and Migrant Forum is on 16th March, 10.30am at Oxford Terrace Baptist church.

We would like to invite all volunteers who will complete a placement in February and April to a dessert evening at the Refugee and Migrant Centre on Friday March 13th, at 7pm.

Upcoming free events

Lazy Week-ends.

Every Saturday and Sunday through February.

Saturdays at the South Quad of the Arts Centre, 2.30pm- 4pm

Sundays at the Central lawn Botanic Gardens, 3.30pm- 5pm

Each day a different musician or band will be performing.

Inner City Multi- Cultural Festival

Saturday 21st February, 11am- 3pm Linwood Community Arts Centre, corner Worcester St and Stanmore Rd. If wet, postponed to Sat 28th Feb.

Experience and celebrate diversity in the city with a multicultural feast of food, activities, song, dance and displays from around the globe.



Childrens Fun Day

Sunday 1st March 11am-4pm

Enjoy a free day out with the family at the Groynes to celebrate Children's Day. Enjoy talented performances from children and youth from around Christchurch. Get active and have a go at a variety of sports: golf, basketball, orienteering, canoeing, fishing and sailing.

Culture Galore!

Saturday 14th March, Ray Blank park, Maidstone Rd 12pm- 4pm.

Cancelled if wet.

The festival will feature performances from over 50 different cultural groups. This will be complemented by children's activities like a bouncy castle, rock climbing and face painting. Tempt your senses and delight your taste buds with the huge array of exotic smells and flavours to sample and purchase through out the day.

Other info/ tips

Info on the Supershed:

The Supershed is located at 220 Pages Rd.

They sell second hand goods and warranty items that are sold for \$100 -items over \$100 can be delivered.

They have daily specials boards.

Late night Wednesday during the summer season, until 8pm.

Thanks to the Supershed for their support of Refugee Services.

TIPS FROM OTHER VOLUNTEERS

There is a \$2 clothing shop down at Ferrymead in Settlers Crescent. All items in the main shop are \$2- some clothing and shoes are more expensive but are in a roped off area. Curtains are also \$2 a drop. Our family bought some really nice ones from there. It is easily accessed by the bus route. Sue Bligh



The Breeze radio station each week features the Angel network where a special volunteer is selected to receive a bunch of flowers. If you would like to nominate a team member send an e-mail to Braydon Priest (bpriest@radioworks.co.nz) with the volunteers name and phone number and a brief description of what they have done. You need to add your own phone number and be prepared to speak briefly on air about the volunteer. This is pre-recorded, not live!

**Reminder- Studylink is now located at Torrens House Level 2,
195 Hereford St.**

GET BEYOND FIREWOOD



Every day, millions of refugee women and girls around the world risk being raped, beaten and even killed as they search for firewood in order to cook for and sustain their families. It is a problem happening everywhere from the Sudan to Sri Lanka, Ethiopia to Nepal.

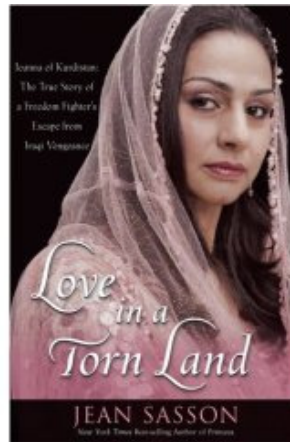
The Women's Refugee Commission (based in New York) is pushing for solutions that reduce the vulnerability of women to this gender violence. In December, humanitarians gathered at a conference in New Delhi, India to look at alternative cooking fuels and technologies in humanitarian settings. Engineers, scientists, local and international NGO's and UN agencies are looking at ways to reduce the risk of violence faced by millions of women and girls.

They are also taking into account the need for methods that will lessen the harmful effects of indoor air pollution and environmental degradation- solar

cookers and clean burning gas cookers are a couple of options. The Woman's Refugee Commission has undertaken a series of site visits, interviewing hundreds of internally displaced women in Darfur, Chad, Nepal, Thailand and Ethiopia to determine their preferences with regard to cooking fuel. Their opinions feed into an inter-agency report, which outlines alternative fuel options, firewood collection techniques and other protection strategies that should be used in displaced and refugee situations.

For more information go to www.womansrefugeecommission.org

BOOK REVIEW



Love in a Torn Land *by Jean Sasson*

Bestselling author Jean Sasson describes the dramatic true story of a young woman, Joanna Al –Askari Hussain caught up in Saddam Hussein's genocide of the Kurdish people of Iraq. From her early life growing up in Baghdad, Joanna travels to the mountainous regions of Kurdistan in the north, becoming a '*peshmerga* wife' to her childhood sweetheart Sarbast. Her dreams for a romantic wedding are shattered when the reality of life as a freedom fighter sets in. She describes the disappointment of a 'wedding without a groom' when dangerous conditions restricted travel, resulting in formalisation of the marriage contract before she can commence her journey. Even the beautiful clothes she prepares for the wedding are left behind in favour of men's attire more suited to the harsh climate and living conditions in the mountains. But this is just the beginning of the adjustments she has to make from a life of privilege to one of privation, danger and struggle.

Set against the backdrop of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s the book portrays the ethnic tensions between Kurds, Iraqi Arabs and Iranians and the wider political machinations of the time. Joanna vividly describes the chemical gas

attacks of Kurdish villages when their first warning would be the sight of dead birds falling from the sky. Temporarily blinded in one such attack, she recalls the desperate flight across the mountains on a mule and the subsequent searching for lost relatives after the Halabja massacre.

While disturbing in places, this book offers fascinating insights into the reality of life as a Kurdish woman caught up in the fight for self determination under Saddam's regime. The enduring struggle for freedom and justice is tinged with personal tragedies and uplifting displays of courage.

With population estimates of up to 40 million people, the Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East and the largest group in the world without their own state. Significant numbers have sought asylum from continuing ethnic persecution in Iraq, Iran and Turkey and many have been resettled in western countries, including New Zealand. This book offers some small insight into the experiences some of our own Kurdish former refugees in Christchurch may have lived through.

Reviewed by Ruqayya Sulaiman-Hill

Be the change that you want to see in the world

Mahatma Ghandi

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this newsletter- if you have information/ articles you would like to see in the next newsletter, please contact Monique on monique.s@paradise.net.nz or phone the office
ph: 366 0497