
RMS Refugee Resettlement News

Issue #29-- December 2006

Akam Bul ta, Aayubovan, Bite-Kinyarwanda, Gaw Ler a Gay, Hello, Kia ora, Nabad, Nihau, Mhoroi, Min ga la ba, Salaam, Salibonani, Shalom, Talofa lava, Vanakkam, Zdravo!

RMS is a monthly electronic newsletter updating you about RMS Refugee Resettlement activities and refugee issues in NZ. If you've any comments about this newsletter, or suggestions about what you'd like to see included, please email us. Feel free to forward this email to anyone else who might be interested in the contents.

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1. National Office:

This year has been both an eventful and significant one for RMS Refugee Resettlement as we have continued our journey of growth and development. A major emphasis has been the ongoing organisational review and associated change processes for the agency across the country. This review has now been completed and signed off by the Board with the final implementation to be completed in early 2007. This continued progress and capacity building has been possible because of the additional funding approved by Cabinet over the four year period which commenced in the 2004-2005 financial year.

Not only has the agency continued to develop and improve its service delivery, I feel we have also built strong foundations that position us well to embrace the opportunities for a positive future. We look forward to continuing to fulfil our obligations as New Zealand's lead Refugee Resettlement agency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Staff, Volunteers, Board, Members, Government Agencies, supporters and other partner organisations for your commitment and dedication towards our goal of the successful resettlement for our refugee communities and new New Zealanders. Wishing you and your families a happy, safe and refreshing Christmas and New Year.

Brett Denham
Acting CEO

2. Mangere Office - 12.12.2006

At the date of writing this, the majority of cases in the November intake departed to their new homes in communities across New Zealand. A small group of Auckland families are still at the Refugee Centre because their allocated

HNZ houses are still undergoing repair work. The final week of the intake proved to be very challenging with trying to complete the necessary handout of paperwork, work through the tenancy offer process for the majority of the out of Auckland cases plus the families resettling in Auckland. We were competing for time with other agencies rescheduling workshops and or adding extra-curricula education sessions in the final week of the intake, plus the later arrivals were still being taken to the bank to enable completion of the W&I processing.

We had an extra challenge of finding minority language group interpreters/cross cultural workers for processing information and interviews but eventually at leaving time, everyone seemed happy to be on their way to their new homes. It's always an emotional time as those leaving for other centres say goodbye to each other and to those remaining in Auckland.

We have had the privilege of working with some new Cross-Cultural Workers who have each in their unique way made a contribution to the new beginnings of several hundred recent arrivals in New Zealand. Our Mangere team has also been strengthened by the addition of our Mangere Coordinator and our Social Worker. Both started with us at the beginning of the intake cycle - literally starting in at the deep end and learning the ropes as they worked through the intake with the cycle of the intake process.

3. Auckland office

The Auckland International Cultural Festival at Potters Park in Auckland. A lot more people turned up from the Host Community this year, after our very active PR campaign, and it was an incredible experience being in the midst of so many nations enjoying each other's food, culture and warmth. The Auckland Newspaper sponsored an art competition for schools, with the winners being exhibited at the Festival, so more children were exposed to the ideas around Auckland's multicultural character. In 2007 the event will move to Wesley, on RMS Refugee Resettlement's back doorstep, and will offer an expanded programme on a much larger park. A highlight will be the introduction of the Ethnic Soccer League competition!

As part of our wider Regional Development initiatives, creating stronger relationships with City Councils and Tangata Whenua, RMS Refugee Resettlement partnered with Waitakere City Council to provide a powhiri at the Te Piringatahi o te Maungarongo Marae for refugees who had settled in the city during the previous six months. The Welcome proved to be a very moving event for all involved and served to help both Tangata Whenua and refugee families see how much their journeys had in common. More 'Welcomes' are planned for the future. The event was acknowledged by the Human Rights Commission who publicised it in the e-newsletter "On the Bright Side"

Relationships with the refugee communities we serve have become stronger this year and one example is the "New Communities' News", a newsletter we send to communities highlighting seminars and educational courses, contacts, information channels and employment avenues appropriate to their needs. Feedback on this has been very encouraging, as leaders finally have access to strategic items of information they need.

The intake makeup change quite dramatically this year as the emphasis shifted to refugees from Burma. We became skilled at hunting down potential Cross Cultural Workers to deal with the new language challenges and added Burmese cuisine to the highlights of the volunteers cross cultural education. We have also become very creative with our volunteer sourcing, and have established great networks for these. Not only have they produced great volunteers but also all kinds of things we need like single beds in

emergencies. With the strengthening of our Volunteer Training Department over the last year, we have been able to provide the kind of support for our volunteers that make their work much more streamlined and enjoyable.

We have been able to strengthen our social work for clients and cross cultural input and we're in the process of shifting to larger premises only a few metres up the road. We'll be ending 2006 with the sense that as a team we have dealt with the year's challenges well! The New Year promises to be a very exciting one. (Janet Mathewson - Regional Development Coordinator)

4. Christchurch office

First impression is where has the year gone?? It has been a year of 'catching up' as we've received smaller intakes than normal. The 8 Kurdish families who arrived in December 2005 have been challenged by the very different New Zealand culture but have adjusted to their host society and it's a pleasure to see them well settled and moving on with their lives.

The children are doing particularly well and enjoy their schooling with the extra homework classes being particularly helpful. We were very lucky to be the city to receive the first every quota refugees from Nepal. Just five young men but we were immediately impressed by their gentle natures and great joy in being in New Zealand. They have a lovely friendship and are very supportive of each other.

Volunteer Sean O'Mahoney became a team member for an Afghan family who came to Christchurch in early 2006. We welcomed him back to work with his third Afghan family in the last two and a half years. Sean is retired and always gives so much of his time to the families he works with. There was a particularly happy moment with the 5 year old deaf son was fitted with a hearing aid, communicating verbally with his Dad and a very tearful but happy Mum for the first time.

Certificates were recently awarded to ten volunteers who passed the NZQA course and we also acknowledged twenty more volunteers for their work, some are with their second and third families. (Anne-Marie Reynolds - Regional Coordinator)

5. Wellington Office

I've been working with RMS Refugee Resettlement for nearly three months as the Wellington Coordinator. We are blessed with having great staff whose only visible faults are eating insufficient amounts of chocolate and spending an awfully long time at work! Other moments for me have been: the former inhabitant of Kurdistan who, when introducing people, jokes "This is so-and-so, he's Saddam's brother or this is so-and-so, he's Osama's cousin.

The waves of Arabic that flow around our building. It sounds like there a hundred ways to say good morning, saluting light, happiness, wealth etc. I'd like to wake up tomorrow speaking fluently. The calibre and commitment of volunteers; they are extraordinarily gracious and generous New Zealanders. Here is part of an email I received (names altered) "The guys flats are all sorted out, phones have been organised. I took them into the City Council on Friday to get their leases signed, which went without a hitch, and they understood most of the agreement. I also got them signed up to the library. We took them to Pak'n'Save to spend their vouchers. They all did very well, just a little confusing on the produce scales. And of course they did ask where they could get 'flavour' from which we assumed they meant MSG. Sam has to go to a Halal butcher in Newtown to get his meat. They've been on a sight seeing tour with Kirsten and Vanessa who also showed them where they needed to go for their WINZ appointment. Vanessa showed them the bus system, on the

way home from the pot luck we walked past a pool hall - and we ended up playing a few quick games of pool."

Sandy Champaneri - Training Coordinator, Wellington

My highlight for 2006 was the opening of the Palmerston North office. It was an exciting development with the Wellington team putting in a huge effort and thoroughly enjoying the experience. Jamila (who sadly isn't with RMS anymore) was an excellent project manager and a team of us (Teresa, Jamila and I) held a successful information evening for the public in the Council Chambers. The Palmerston North City Council has been extremely supportive. I've also been involved in training courses in preparation for the arrival of the first group of Congolese who arrived in March. Four training courses have been held in Palmerston North this year and we've been thrilled with the commitment from local volunteers.
Kia ora, Best wishes to all from the Wellington staff.

6. Palmerston North Office

There have been a number of highlights and 'firsts' for the Palmerston North community. The opening of our PN office in January was a significant moment in preparation for the successful settlement of the four intakes that we received this year. World Refugee Day was a first for Palmerston North and we had a shared lunch that was well attended by former refugees, Government and Non Government organisations, school teachers, volunteers etc. We also had another well attended lunch for International Volunteers Day. (Shamel Majid)

7. Staff Appointments

We are delighted to be able to welcome two new staff to the RMS Refugee Resettlement Team and Remy, who is now a permanent staff member on the Auckland team!

Remy Bucumi has been working as a Cross Cultural Worker for RMS Refugee Resettlement since 1995 and was recently appointed the Senior Cross Cultural worker for the region. Remy has been a Volunteer Project Worker for AMECEA in Nairobi, Kenya where he assisted in settling refugees from Rwanda, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi into life in Kenya. He has an International Certificate in Business Administration and a Diploma in Economics, Sciences and Business Administration.

Angie Chan, originally from Singapore, has recently begun work for RMS Refugee Resettlement as a Social Worker in Auckland. She has a Masters in Social Work and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Angie has also worked for the Chinese New Settlers Trust and has also worked for Child, Youth and Family Services as well as a Volunteer Coordinator for HCA Hospice Care in Singapore. Angie will start 8 January.

Peter Scott has been appointed the new Central Region Manager. He will be based in Wellington and starts with RMS Refugee Resettlement in mid January 2007. For the past seven years Peter was a New Zealand Red Cross delegate seconded to the International Committee of the Red Cross as team leader (program manager) with roles in the Sudan, Serbia and Montenegro, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Vanuatu and Pakistan administered Kashmir. One his roles included coordination of relief programmes supplying emergency relief items to vulnerable populations. Peter will begin his new role on 15 January.

8. Spectrum Documentary - National Radio - Dec 24

On Christmas Eve afternoon, 24 December 12.15pm, National Radio's "Spectrum" documentary follows a group of RMS Refugee Resettlement Volunteers through some of their training sessions, to meeting their 'family' at the Wellington airport and those first few weeks/months of helping settle them into their new home and community. Listen out (frequencies can be found on www.radionz.co.nz - most places can pick up 101.FM) either on Sunday or on Thursday 28 December 7.30pm

9. Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management

Unitec NZ's Graduate Diploma in Not-For-Profit Management is a unique, part-time programme designed for managers, coordinators, team leaders, volunteers and board members of not-for-profit organisations. It helps managers and their organisations be more effective and addresses the complexity of working in this particular sector. It's a great opportunity to reflect on your management experience, integrate it with theory, build further skills and network with others in similar roles. Courses are in short blocks of two or three days and are available in six New Zealand centres. You can choose how many courses you take each year. There are only a few introductory courses being run in each region in 2007. For further details please contact Information Centre 0800 10 95 10 or www.community.unitec.ac.nz or 09-815-4321 x5068 - jdickinson@unitec.ac.nz

10. The Global Education Centre - CD Refugees Stories

The Global Education Centre is creating a CD of refugee stories for use in Schools and community groups. The aim is to increase understanding of the delivery of refugee experiences and provide and opportunity for refugees to tell their own stories in their own words. If you are in the Wellington region and interested in taking part in the project, or would like to know more, please contact Pania Walton. Email: pania@globaled.org.nz or Ph:(04)496-9593 before March (or 384-7739 between 23 Dec and 15 Jan 2007)

He aha te mea nui? He aha te mea nui o te ao?
Maku e ki atu. He tangata he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing? What is the most important thing in the world? I will say to you. It is people, it is people, it is people.

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