



Muslim Social Services

- > Update on the three Palestinian families we're sponsoring
- > Introduction of two new refugee programs
- > Thank you to all of the Storytimes volunteers!
- > Thank you to Ammar Halal Meats and Kitchener Halal Meats for making the 2009 Udhiya program a success!

Muslim Social Services KW

Message from the coordinator

Assalamualaikum,

The last few months have been very busy for us. Alahmdulillah, there was a lot accomplished in the last few months, the highlight of which was a very successful program for refugee mothers and children. The program was well received by the participants and there is an overwhelming demand to continue the program.

We are grateful to everyone who made the Storytimes program happen, Mosaic Counselling Services for being our sponsor and offering their facilities, MSS volunteers, Sr. Fran Pappert Shannon and Sr. Naila Javed, Community Service Learning students, Justine Dogbe and Kelsey Rhodes and Bridge training program intern, Patrick Kamba.

Many laughs were shared, some tears shed and a powerful sanctuary was created for the mothers to share the joys and challenges of living in Canada, while reminiscing

on the difficult days of the past and hoping for peace in their lives and the lives of those the women left behind. After a time of fun and games, the children always hesitated to leave at the end.

MSS has been awarded a grant by the Waterloo Region Public Health Department to lead program for refugee youth, due to begin in the third week of January.

Congratulations to Tas and Kareem Kareem, who involved MSS in the Thanksgiving Brigade program. They raised over 2800lbs of food and delivered food baskets to twenty one needy families.

The 2009 Udhiya program was a great success this year as well. Over sixty needy families received coupons from MSS for the Udhiya drive. Thanks to Ammar Halal Meats and Kitchener Halal Meats for their cooperation in making the program a success. Three more sheep donated by some Mississauga families

were distributed to more than a dozen families. Thanks to all our supporters.

MSS continues to be involved in supporting newcomer refugees to KW area. We offer whatever support we can in helping with their integration process. As part of the Muslim Mennonite Dialogue, initiated over two years ago, two Mennonite Churches and two Masajid are jointly sponsoring three Palestinian refugee families living in the El-Hol camp on the Syrian/Iraqi border who are due to arrive any time.

As the winter gets harsher, the homeless in our community will be scrambling to find a hot meal and a place to stay warm. Once again we would like to offer a meal to these members of our community through Out of the Cold program. You will receive more information about the event as we get closer to the date.

Idrisa Pandit

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Refugee Women's Program

The refugee women's program met every Thursday for six weeks. Participants were women from the Rohingya and the Afghani community. The group was led by Idrisa Pandit and Naila Javed and the topics ranged from healthy living, stress management, anger management and other mental health issues, resolving family conflict and parenting. The weekly group sessions provided a safe space for the women to share their joys and sorrows with sisters who had gone through similar life experiences, giving them comfort that they are not alone in their struggles. Many friendships were made; lessons were learned from shared experience, there was a lot of laughter, and many tears.

Zainab Arkani and Azada Faez provided assistance with interpretation and Naila Javed shared her valuable experience as a therapist and social worker.

**Thank you to
our
sponsors
for the
Refugee
Youth
Program!**

Refugee Youth Program

We are pleased to introduce a new program directed at refugee youth (ages 13-18). This will be a youth-led initiative to provide new Canadian refugee youth a chance to learn about their new life in Canada. Each week will include a physical activity, computer activity, art activity and guest lecturer, for five weeks.

The sessions will be held at Chandler-Mowat Community Centre and MSS would like to thank The Region of Waterloo Public Health Division, Wilfrid Laurier University and Mosaic Counselling Services for their generous support of this program.

Contact MSS for more information or to sign up for the program as space is limited.

Palestinian Refugee Families

MSS continues to be involved in supporting newcomer refugees to KW area. We offer whatever support we can in helping with their integration process. As part of the Muslim Mennonite Dialogue, initiated over two years ago, two Mennonite Churches and two Masajid are jointly sponsoring three Palestinian refugee families living in the El-Hol camp on the Syrian/Iraqi border.

MSS will provide support for the settlement of these families and donations of furniture, kitchen supplies and other household items have poured in already. Some people have prepared welcome care packages for the families and others are donating their time to move the goods and help the families in whatever way they can. Thanks are due to all who are working hard on this project.

Storytimes: A huge success

The happy sound of children's laughter echoed through the halls of Mosaic Counselling and Family Services in downtown Kitchener on six Thursday evenings in October, November and December, as Muslim Social Services presented "Welcome to Canada" Storytimes for young refugee children.

The objective of the program was to provide a warm welcome to young newcomers to Canada in a comfortable and caring atmosphere. Children aged 5 – 8 from Afghanistan, Somalia and Myanmar enjoyed inspiring stories, joyful songs, fun finger rhymes, playful puppets and creative crafts. Storytimes was hosted by MSS volunteer Sister Fran Pappert-Shannon, with assistance from interpreters and student volunteers from Wilfrid Laurier University.

"What an honour to share in the excitement and curiosity that the children brought to our Storytimes" said Sister Fran. "Language and cultural differences were not barriers to the fun we had as we explored themes including 'Canada, My New Home', 'Family and Friends', 'Colours in the World Around Me' and 'Winter is Coming'. Many of the stories that we read together focused upon the refugee experience, and the uncertainties that children might have in new environments. I believe that the Storytimes were very positive and assuring occasions for everyone involved, filled with smiles, hugs and hope."

Muslim Social Services thanks the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation for a grant that covered the Storytimes' expenses, including craft supplies, nutritious snacks and bus transportation to Mosaic.



MSS was featured in The Record with an article about Storyitmes.

Muslim-Mennonite Dialogue

Once a month, a group of Muslims of all ages visits the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario to volunteer their time to pack relief kits, knot quilts and pack school kits for needy people around the world.

Kit-packing at MCC is a great venue where people from different faiths get a chance to know each other in a spontaneous way. This is also a great opportunity for high school students to obtain their volunteer hours and at the same time they are able to respond to the needy around the world.

Participants in these kit packing sessions always find it an enjoyable experience and find themselves coming back. Evening snacks after the kit-packaging sessions are a good opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences between Muslim and Mennonites. MSS looks forward to continuing work with MCC.

**Look on page 4 for
upcoming kit-
packing and quilting
dates!**

Mennonite Central Committee Kit Packing

As part of the on-going Mennonite Muslim dialogue, MSS partners with our Mennonite brothers and sisters. We have several joint activities during the year. One ongoing activity is packing medical and relief kits at the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario once a month.

Upcoming Kit-Packing Dates: January 29, February 26; 7-9pm
Mennonite Central Committee: 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener

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What is MSS?

Muslim Social Services of Kitchener Waterloo is a Muslim volunteer organization that provides culturally and spiritually sensitive humanitarian and social services to the Muslim and non-Muslim community of Waterloo Region. MSS was started in January 2007, although members of the group have been actively serving the community for many years.

For more information about MSS, or how you can get involved, please visit www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org

Upcoming Events:

Exploring Islam resumes	Jan. 12
Welcome to Canada Youth Program starts	Jan. 23
MCC: kit-packing and quilting	Jan. 29