



BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Opening hearts and minds: Small-town sponsorship



Rural communities and small towns have a lot to offer refugees, says Gilbert Iyamuremye, the Diocese of London SAH coordinator. A former refugee himself, and survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Gilbert devotes himself to resettling as many refugees as possible in Southwestern Ontario towns and rural areas. Gilbert works not only with Catholic parishes, but “anyone who wants to sponsor.” He’s found that small communities offer work opportunities and a tight-knit, supportive community as well as language learning. The communities also benefit from their new residents. [RSTP’s new video Open Hearts: Small Town Refugee Sponsorship features interviews with four of these sponsoring groups.](#)

The Aldaqaq family, originally from Syria, settled in 2016 in Ingersoll, a small town of 13,000 near London. “At first they weren’t sure about living where there were no other Arabic speakers,” says Michelle Caskey, a member of the sponsoring group. “But within a month the kids were speaking English.”

The school and community were welcoming, with teachers volunteering to give English lessons to the family at home. The father’s priority was finding work. “He started asking where he could find a job as soon as he got off the plane,” recalls Michelle. An experienced mechanic who once owned several garages, he soon found a job as a tire technician.

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program helps resettle refugees identified by United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as the most vulnerable in need of resettlement. It is called blended because it is a cost sharing arrangement. Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides up to six months of income support for the newcomers, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, start-up costs and up to one year of social and emotional support.

Today, the Aldaqaq family owns their own house in Ingersoll, something that would be difficult to achieve in a large city, and the father plans to start a business of his own.

The sponsorship has brought the community together in new ways. The sponsoring group includes members of both Sacred Heart Catholic Church and the Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church. “It’s been a really amazing experience with both churches, which often don’t do things together,” says Michelle.

In Tecumseh, a town of 23,000 near Windsor, a group of United Churches came together to resettle a Syrian family with Gilbert’s help. “We were all advocates to help this family find employment,” says Joanne Neilson. “Word spreads quickly in a smaller community.” Abdul Alhamawe found work as an electrician after just three months. “If you go to a big city,” he says, “it’s very hard to find a job.”

The arrival of the family has also affected attitudes in the town. “It opens your heart and mind,” says Lauren Snyder-Grant. This is also true in the schools. “The other children hear where these foreign countries are and they’re asking questions,” says Joanne Neilson. “It’s big!”

Featured BVOR profile

Syrian family looking for sponsors in Kitchener, ON

A 43 year old man accompanied by his wife (39), four sons and infant daughter. Both parents have six years of education. He has worked as a butcher, carpenter and restaurant owner.

The children are considered "Children and Adolescents at Risk" and will benefit from additional support. The father is a survivor of violence and/or torture, and is blind in one eye. This does not affect his activities.

You can make a difference in this family's life by sponsoring them to come to Canada. Form a group and contact the Refugee Sponsorship Training program. Ask us about the BVOR program.

If you or your group is interested in sponsoring this family or any BVOR refugees but require financial support, there is currently **BVOR funding available** that could help with the large portion of the financial support that is required of BVOR sponsors. It will cover the cost of each BVOR sponsorship except for the start-up costs. All applications should be received by August 31, 2019.

Qualifying SAHs will be able to apply for \$5,000 per BVOR case to help with the administrative costs associated with supporting BVOR sponsorships.

For more information regarding the funding, please contact BVORfund@refugeehub.ca

BLENDING VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVOR) PROGRAM

For more information, visit www.rstp.ca or email bvor@rstp.ca

Refugee
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Right now, there are 29 new BVOR profiles available on RSTP's matching database.

Refugee populations in the BVOR program include:

- Syrian, Iranian
- Congolese, Somali, Sudanese

Particular vulnerabilities or reasons for resettlement include:

- Women and girls at risk
- Survivors of violence and/or torture
- Lack of foreseeable alternative solutions

To learn more about the countries BVOR refugees come from, visit: <http://www.rstp.ca/en/refugees/country-condition-information/>

Profiles of BVOR refugees needing sponsors can be found in the RSTP-BVOR Matching Database:

<https://cathcrosscultural.sharepoint.com/rstp>

Hamilton BVOR Event

Join the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) for an inspiring evening on how you and your colleagues can sponsor refugees through the BVOR program.

Tyler Berglund, owner of Hamilton's Doors Pub: Taco Joint & Metal Bar will talk of his inspiration for inviting his colleagues to sponsor a refugee family, as well as the joys and challenges of sponsorship.

Please register for the event using the link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/sponsoring-refugees-through-the-blended-visa-office-referred-bvor-program-tickets-62262778647>