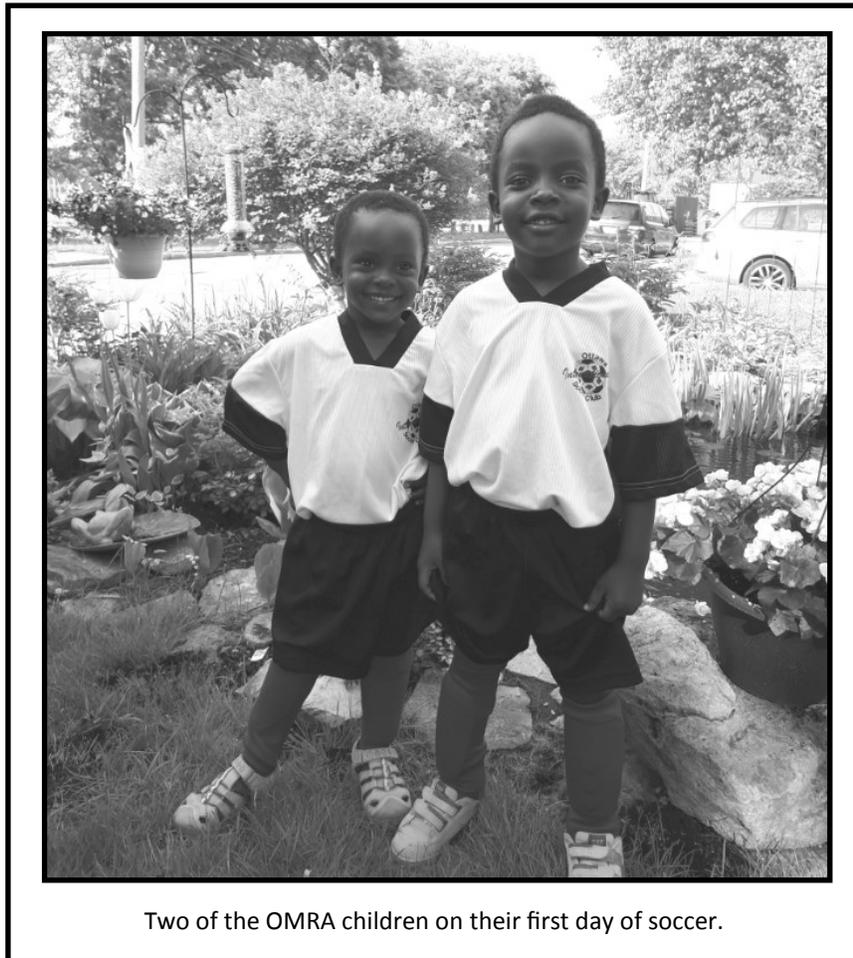


Three New OMRA Families in Early 2018



Two of the OMRA children on their first day of soccer.

This year OMRA has provided three new rent subsidies and is now supporting nine families in total. Here are a few details about these most recent subsidy recipients.

A single woman from Liberia: Through a partnership with Glebe-St. James United Church and FACES (First Avenue Churches and Community

Embracing Sponsorship), OMRA is providing a housing subsidy to a woman sponsored by the church. The OMRA subsidy will assist her in the next year or two while she finishes school and finds a job. She began her subsidy in month 13 after the official church sponsorship ended. We are excited to work with Glebe-St. James because

OMRA Adds New Volunteers

Thanks to its new model, OMRA is now helping more families. To provide friendly visits and settlement support to this larger group, OMRA has recruited some new volunteers.

With the help of Refugee 613 earlier this year, OMRA put out a call for volunteers to the refugee support community in Ottawa. Ten people responded to our call. Carol Buckley, an OMRA board member, conducted training sessions for our volunteers in April. The volunteers are now ready and willing to meet with OMRA families to have English conversation, tutor and help families navigate around Ottawa.

The volunteers have a wide variety of backgrounds and include students, teachers and internationalists with a long history of aid work. OMRA is very fortunate to have support from people with such diverse skill sets.

One volunteer, Ed, said, "What a joy to help N. and her two wonderful children... What joy to introduce them to new things, trees without leaves in winter, changing lengths of the day, underground parking garages. I am having fun as I help them."

Three New OMRA Families (cont.)

this congregation has been an integral part of the grocery card program since 2003.

A family of three from the Congo: In early March the Refugee Assistance Program at the Ottawa Mennonite Church received news that a Congolese woman and her two young children had been accepted as refugees by the Canadian government. This family was a perfect fit for OMRA's housing program and she and her children have become the eighth family receiving our 3-year subsidy. She chose a lovely apartment near parks and has become part of the Ottawa Mennonite Church. A settlement/support group has formed around her and includes two wonderful volunteers from the community, Ed and Ruby, and members of the Ottawa Mennonite Church. These volunteers have helped with basic

settlement issues, as well as doing fun things, such as taking the family on tours of Ottawa and to the Canadian Museum of History and helping the children learn to ride bikes.

A Syrian family of four: Our ninth family consists of a grandmother, a mother and two teenage boys. This family arrived in Canada through Trinity Anglican Church and the Ottawa South Committee for Refugee Sponsorship (OSCRS). When they arrived, we were invited to a wonderful welcome party with the most delicious Syrian food. They have been enrolled in school and are already planting a vegetable garden around their home.

By providing rental subsidies, OMRA is able to support more families than we were able to in the past. OMRA plans to offer subsidies to additional individuals and families later this year.

Applying for a Rent Subsidy

With the recent change in our operating model, OMRA is now able to support 10–12 families at any one time. To select eligible families, OMRA now accepts applications for rent subsidies from groups conducting private refugee sponsorships.

Applications are assessed by the OMRA board on an ongoing basis. Decisions for selection of families are made by consensus at an OMRA board meeting and are based on the following guiding principles:

- Newly arrived families or families in their 13th month in Canada (after sponsorship ends) are considered.
- Financial need for a rent subsidy will be demonstrated.
- The amount of the financial subsidy must be allocated such that it helps the family stay in safe affordable housing that will be sustainable by the family as they move towards financial independence.
- Priority is given to small families, as large families generally receive sufficient funds through the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) program.
- OMRA wishes to maintain a balance of government and privately sponsored refugee families.
- OMRA must have the financial and volunteer capacity to take on another family.

OMRA recognizes that refugee families are in a vulnerable position when they reach their 13th month in Canada, since this is when their government or private sponsorship ends. Newly

arrived families receive a federal housing supplement during the first year, but that stops as the families transition to Ontario Works. (Note that not all families use social assistance in their 13th month, but most do). Housing can be very difficult to afford after the first year.

OMRA is finding that it is necessary to fully understand the financial need of the family. When OMRA only supported families in OMRA-owned townhouses, the costs for each family were similar. But with a variety of housing types, landlords, rental costs and family sizes, it is necessary to calculate an appropriate subsidy for each new family. While the 3-year subsidy will still be the norm for newly arrived families, we are entering into a variety of agreements of varying lengths and subsidy amounts.

For government-assisted refugee families, OMRA continues to work with the Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI) to identify subsidy recipients. CCI refers suitable families to us and we then work with CCI to find safe affordable accommodations and to calculate a suitable rent subsidy.

In all cases, OMRA's goals are to help families afford housing when they do not receive enough from sponsorships or social assistance and to support families working towards financial independence.

Applications are accepted at any time and will be reviewed based on the criteria listed above. To obtain an application form, please contact OMRA at rigby.maria@gmail.com

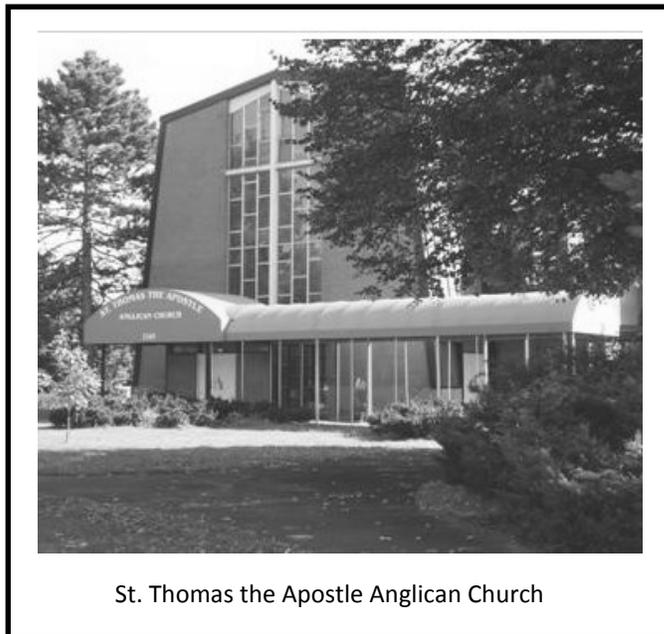
The End Is Just the Beginning

Report from St. Thomas the Apostle

In September 2016, two Anglican parishes, St. Thomas the Apostle and Church of the Resurrection, welcomed a refugee family from Iran. Leila and her two children, Nazanin and Amir, spent four uncomfortable years in Malaysia before arriving in Canada.

Although our sponsorship formally ended in August 2017, the parishes have maintained ties with the family. Ongoing donations created a surplus that was converted into a rental subsidy until the end of March 2018. So generous were the two parishes that it was not necessary to seek rental support from OMRA.

The family values education and hard work. Nazanin has two part-time jobs and will enter the Interior Decorating program at Algonquin College in September. Amir, who is also working part-time, expects to complete grade 12 in the coming year and then attend university. Leila works her hair-styling magic six days a week at two salons, building up a clientele so that she can again operate her own business as she did in Iran.



St. Thomas the Apostle Anglican Church

Leila, Nazanin and Amir have met the challenges facing them with courage and determination. Their already good English skills have improved and they now have Canadian work experience, which will stand them in good stead in the future. Supporting this family has been a rewarding experience for all involved.

Sandra Wright

Volunteers Wanted

OMRA is looking for a new board member or other volunteer to work closely with the board. This is a chance to be part of a dynamic and dedicated team that is developing new programs and expanding its reach to serve more refugee families. To find out more, please contact Maria or Pierre (see contact info on the right).

Contact OMRA

General Inquiries and Project Information:

Pierre Chetelat

james.chetelat@mail.mcgill.ca

Fundraising:

Maria Rigby

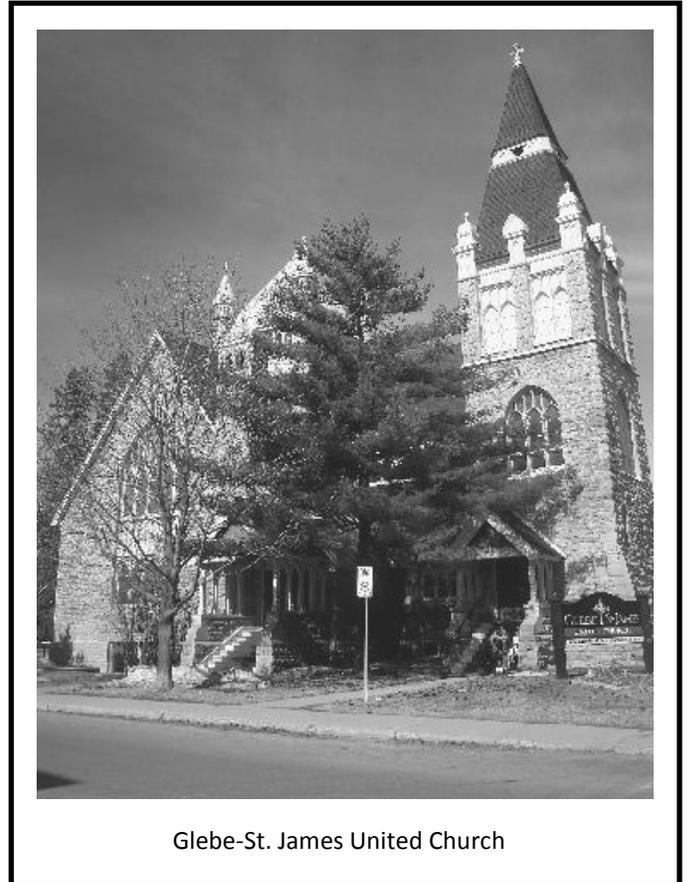
rigby.maria@gmail.com

Church Visit

Report from Glebe-St. James

On January 28, Doreen Dyck gave an update on OMRA's activities to the congregation at Glebe-St. James United Church on behalf of the OMRA board. She met some of the supporters of OMRA's grocery card program and had an exchange with a Glebe-St. James representative of FACES (First Avenue Churches and Community Embracing Sponsorship), a partnership of three churches and a community group that have been providing care and support to refugees since 2015. Lodi, Emad and their children—a family from Syria receiving an OMRA rental subsidy—also attended the event. The congregation had a chance to ask the family questions about their life in Syria, the circumstances that brought them to Canada and their first impressions in their new country. Glebe-St. James would like to thank all our guests for sharing their time and stories with us.

Marisa Romano



Glebe-St. James United Church

OMRA Grocery Card Program

Each year OMRA raises over \$20,000 through its grocery card program. This money is used to provide rental subsidies for refugee families and to maintain our townhouses.

How does the program work? All you need to do to support OMRA is to order and buy grocery cards from the coordinator at your church. Grocery cards are available in various denominations from Loblaws (Your Independent Grocer), Metro (Food

Basics) and Farm Boy. When you use these cards to buy your monthly groceries, you get the full value of the card and the grocery chain gives OMRA five percent of what you spend. You help support OMRA and it costs you nothing.

If you would like to involve your church or neighbourhood in our program, please get in touch with Maria Rigby (see page 4 for contact info).

Children Benefit from Sport Subsidy Program



Their Opportunity exists to provide families in need with the means to enrol their children in local sports programs.

The hope is that by alleviating the financial costs of enrolment fees, children can develop the confidence, social skills and healthy lifestyle attainable through sport.

What is unique is that children receiving sponsorship are required to "pay it forward" through Their Opportunity's Give Back Program. Each child who receives financial assistance is expected to find someone or some agency in Ottawa that needs volunteers so that they too can give a little back to the community.

Four children from OMRA families are now playing soccer—one at the competitive level with the Ottawa Internationals Soccer Club—because of Their Opportunity.

The four children are talking about what they can do to give back. Two are going to help older people in their church with gardening (weeding and maybe some planting!) and the other two will help with the Ten Thousand Villages Fair Trade Festival sales.

If you know any children who could benefit from this, please go register online at their website www.theiropportunity.com/apply. Application help is friendly and easily available.