

Refugee Family Reunification Trust Newsletter



TRUST BRINGS MORE THAN 500 REFUGEES TO WELLINGTON

The Trust has now paid for airfares to bring over 500 people - many of whom were children and young people - to re-join their families in Wellington. With our assistance, more than 160 families have been reunited.

The high cost of one-way airfares to Wellington – approximately \$2,000 per person – is beyond the means of most refugees, who often flee their country with nothing. Many of the families we have helped have been very large, and so the cost of the airfares can be over \$10,000 for one family. It is simply impossible for refugees to meet these costs. Yet for many, it is also impossible to make a new life in New Zealand when they know that their loved ones remain in perilous situations. It would be tragic if refugee families, who had been approved to live in New Zealand, remained separated simply because they could not afford to pay for the cost of the airfares - the final step in reuniting their family.

By nationality, the families we have assisted were originally from Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Liberia, Sudan, Myanmar, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Banda Ache. Many of these families were living in refugee camps.

We have raised over one million dollars for refugees - 100% of which has gone to refugees. We are particularly proud of this achievement, as not a single dollar of donations has been used to generate this income. We do not pay for advertising, fundraisers, salaries or rent - so that all donations can be given to refugees. No remuneration is paid to the Trustees, and separate funding is obtained specifically for unavoidable administration costs, such as audit fees, and we are able to keep these to a bare minimum due to the Trust's reliance on unpaid volunteers. The Trust receives no government funding.

The number of refugees seeking our help continues to increase, and the past year has been one of our busiest. We will continue our work successfully reuniting refugee families, and we hope that you are able to continue to support us.

Another significant achievement this year was the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between the Trust, The Salvation Army and Catholic Social Services, which provides a framework for collaboration to better support refugees and their families in Wellington who have been assisted by the Trust, including by providing food, furniture, clothing and social work support.

Wellington Airport, in partnership with Wellington Community Trust and Wellington City Council, awarded us Runner-Up in the Health and Wellbeing Category of the Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards 2014. In addition to the award, we received \$250. Wellington Airport is a special place for the refugee families we help, as it is where they are finally reunited, and where they begin their new lives together, so we are all the more pleased to receive this recognition.

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Refugee Family Reunification Trust
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Wellington 6141

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2014
Regional
Community
Awards
Wellington City
Finalist



Z Constable Street in Newtown kindly chose us as one of four community groups to be included in its Good in the Hood campaign. After public voting, we received \$1,030. Thank you to everyone who voted for us, and particular thanks to Z Constable St for supporting us as a local neighbourhood charity.

Pride Film Fundraiser

The Trustees are extremely grateful to the Social Justice Group of the Catholic Parish of Otari (which includes St Theresa's Church in Karori and St Thomas More Church in Northland) for organising a fundraising screening of *Pride* at the Penthouse Theatre in October - raising \$2,800. Special thanks to the many sponsors who generously donated vouchers and products for the raffles and spot prizes, including The Interislander (\$250 travel voucher), The Penthouse (movie tickets), Countdown Karori, Marsden Village Café, Taylor's Drycleaners, Top Cuisine Takeaways, Gipps St Deli, Gipps St Butchery, Pembroke Motors, Hell Pizza (Northland), Beauty SOS, Streaks Ahead, The Olive Grove (Martinborough), and Karori Flower Shop. We truly appreciate the effort, work and generosity that went into making this night so successful, and we thank everyone for their support.



The Lunchbox Film Fundraiser

In September, a very successful fundraising screening of *The Lunchbox* was held at Lighthouse Cuba – raising \$1,050. Special thanks to law graduates at Simpson Grierson, Catie Murray and Melanie Jagusch, for organising the whole event.

The money will help Carmenza, a refugee from Colombia, pay for the application fee required by Immigration New Zealand to bring her mother to join her in Wellington. Carmenza and her son were forced to flee Colombia after a terrorist group threatened to harm her son if she refused to store guns for them. Leaving everything behind, they were refugees in Ecuador for 6 years before being accepted for resettlement in New Zealand. Coincidentally, a Simpson Grierson solicitor, Josh McGettigan, is the volunteer at Community Law Wellington and Hutt Valley helping with the immigration process in respect of her mother. As Carmenza's son explains:

Since my mother and I were resettled in New Zealand we haven't had peace in our hearts because we are very concerned about my grandmother. She is not in a good situation in our country Colombia. We really miss her, she had been always with us helping us emotionally. Knowing that we are safe in this country and she is not safe in Colombia make us feel so anxious and depressed. Our lives are not completed without her, our dream is to have her next to us in New Zealand. We were very worried because we thought it is impossible for us to bring my grandmother here to New Zealand because it is so expensive and we do not have the money to do it. However when our lawyer told us about the Refugee Family Reunification Trust some hope brightened our lives. We know that with the financial help of the trust and with the help of God our dream of having my grandmother next to us is going to become a reality. Thanks Refugee Family Reunification Trust for your help.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

We remain extremely grateful to all our donors, as they are ultimately responsible for the successful reunification of so many deserving families. To each and every one of our donors, thank you. We hope that you are able to continue your support, as each donation – whether by way of regular automatic payments, or a one-off donation - is a vital contribution towards getting a family back together again.

A number of individuals and private trusts, who prefer to remain anonymous, have made very generous donations to our Trust. Other significant donors over the past year include: Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand; the Thomas George Macarthy Trust; The Catholic Foundation; Archdiocese of Wellington; the Archdiocesan Tindall Allocations Committee; Nikau Foundation; Yvonne and Peter Cottier; Crengle, Shreves and Ratner; St Joseph's Parish (Mt Victoria); and Queen Margaret College. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Toi Design Rainwear generously donated great wet-weather gear for refugee families, and Phil & Ted's support included refurbishing a double buggy to original condition, which went to a recently arrived family with a number of small children. Kiwi Community Assistance kindly gives food and furniture to families in need.

Many volunteers have kindly given their time to help run the Trust, to organise fundraising or to help new families with their resettlement. Special thanks to Alison Dyer for keeping the accounts. English Language Partners Wellington support us in a number of ways, including by the use of their box number. We would also like to thank the Trust's auditor, Peter Scholtens. We are very grateful to Phil Dyer for taking photographs for the Trust, and to Lesley Hooper for helping to manage the database. David Colls again generously donated his time to format this newsletter. Sr Rachel and Nathan Smith as volunteers both kindly helped new families with their resettlement. Simon Calder manages the website and database. Simpson Grierson provides pro bono legal support. Your assistance is invaluable.



NIKAU FOUNDATION

REFUGEES' STORIES

Luz's Story Luz fled from Colombia to Ecuador with her disabled son after family members were threatened with violence. They were then refugees in Ecuador for five years. Eventually Luz and her son were resettled in New Zealand by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Luz's other son, his wife and their two children remained in danger in Colombia: *"I was always afraid that something bad was going to happen to them. It is very sad to live so far away and not to be able to help my own family."* Luz wanted to bring her family to safety, but the cost and difficulties at first seemed insurmountable. However, Luz applied to the Trust for help with the application fees and medicals required by Immigration New Zealand, and for help with the cost of their airfares. They arrived to safety in Wellington in November 2013. This funding was raised with the help of St Joseph's Parish in Mt Victoria, and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand. *"When the family is here, for me, it is incredible. I am forever grateful for your support to make the reunion with my family possible."*



Luz reunited with her family
Photo by Adrian Heke/Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

Faduma's Story Faduma is originally from Somalia, and came to New Zealand as a refugee in 1999 after living in a refugee camp in Ethiopia for 10 years. Faduma applied under the Refugee Family Support Category to sponsor her brother, his wife and their eight children aged 17, 16, 14, 7, 6, 5, 3, and 2. The oldest three are adopted family members. The Refugee Family Reunification Trust helped with the cost of the application fees and medicals required by Immigration New Zealand, and paid \$26,000 for their airfares from Somalia to Wellington. In May this year Faduma and her brother, Hussein, were finally reunited after 15 years apart. Hussein explained through an interpreter that he wants to learn English so that he can say thank you to the Trust. The family are very happy to be here, and the older children have started school and are excited to have the opportunity to get an education.

For the ninth successive year, Year 9 students at Queen Margaret College raised funds for the Trust and helped a new refugee family. This year the girls helped Faduma's family by raising just over \$1,300 towards their airfares, as well as providing the children with school bags filled with essential stationery, and goodies for the younger children such as toys, books, clothing and nappies. The teachers, students and mothers also joined forces to knit peggy squares to make colourful, warm blankets for the family.

We wish to acknowledge and thank Queen Margaret College teachers and students for their strong and sustained commitment to refugees, and for their practical contribution towards helping those who are most in need in our community.

Julia's Story *"Living in New Zealand by myself for a few years, I thought I could get used to being on my own, but it's not true. When I am not well, or when I am happy or sad, I don't really have anyone to share it with, and that sometimes makes my life more difficult."*

When my brothers and sisters and I were little, our parents taught us how important a family is, and to support your family in good and bad times. Although many people have supported me when I needed help, it is not the same as my family.

Now my wish to have my family with me will come true because of your generosity towards us. When I learnt that my brother could join me here, I didn't know what to say, it meant so much to me and my parents because my parents always worried about me and my brother. It is so amazing and inspiring that without knowing who they are, what kind of people they are, or where they are from, you generously give financial help to people that you have never met. I thank you for all your hard work to help us. I might not be able to give back to you what you have given to us, but I pray to God and I believe that God will give back to you what you have given to other people."

Julia's brother arrived in Wellington in May this year. In June, Julia was one of the guest speakers at Parliament to mark World Refugee Day.



Julia and Daniel, speakers at Parliament on World Refugee Day - both helped by the Trust. Photo by Neil Mackenzie/New Zealand Red Cross

Moti's Story *"I can't believe it, really, I can't believe it"*, was what a former Oromo refugee, Moti, kept saying when he learnt late last year that he would finally be reunified with his 14 year old son and two younger siblings aged 20 and 23. Losing his mother to illness in 2012 meant that he had given up hope that his family would qualify as a family unit under the Refugee Family Support Category without her as the central applicant. However, the Associate Minister of Immigration approved his case as a special one, so that his three young family members could be relocated together. Moti has happily supported all his family's needs for many years – but the chance for them to be together, and for them to think about finishing study and beginning careers, has given them a whole new start.



Photo by Ross Collins

Moti's case is one that demonstrates the strong emotional bonds that hold families together, and the importance of reunifying families as family groups, rather than picking out isolated individuals to be relocated here. Moti's sister has been the primary caregiver for Moti's son over the last few years, and as she is just a few years older than her nephew, they have an extremely close relationship. Moti explained: *"My sister has looked after my son so well. She is his Mum too, and he needs her"*. It was really important for the three of them to stay together, even though initially it looked like only Moti's son and one of the siblings was eligible to come. To leave any of them behind was unthinkable to the family, Moti said - *"so this is really, really amazing!"* They all arrived in March this year and will undertake English study and, in the case of Moti's son, complete secondary school. *"I am just really, really happy"* Moti says, *"thank you so much to the people giving to the Refugee Family Reunification Trust - this is amazing for my family to be together, thank you"*.

Sahra's Story After fleeing from Somalia to Kenya, a fearful and insecure life in Nairobi, and more than seven years' separation from their mother, Sahra's two children finally arrived in Wellington in March 2014. At 12 and 15 years old, they had grown up a lot since Sahra had last seen them, but she had never given up hope of bringing them to join her here. Sahra's only contact with her children over those years was through costly phone calls. She also regularly sent money to help pay for their food, clothes and education. The immigration process took more than five years, and the costs involved were substantial for a refugee who had come here with nothing. The Trust paid over \$11,000 towards the application fees, the cost of the medicals, the appeal fees and the airfares. As Sahra said *"without the Trust, I could not have brought my children to New Zealand"*.

About Us

The Refugee Family Reunification Trust is a charitable trust incorporated under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957 and registered under the Charities Act 2005. Donations of \$5 or more can be tax deductible.

The purpose of the Trust is to financially assist refugees in the Wellington region to bring immediate family members to join them here. Reuniting these families greatly improves the lives of those refugees already living in New Zealand, and is critical to their successful resettlement and integration.

All money raised is used exclusively to help refugees pay for the expenses directly related to bringing family members from refugee situations. This includes application fees charged by, and medical reports required by, Immigration New Zealand, and the cost of airfares to bring approved family members to New Zealand.

How You Can Help

Post – Send a donation to the Refugee Family Reunification Trust, PO Box 27342, Marion Square, Wellington 6141.

Automatic Payment – Contact your bank to obtain and complete an automatic payment form.

Telephone – Call us to discuss any fundraising event you are organising that may contribute towards the Trust.

Email – Send a message to acalder@xtra.co.nz

Internet Banking - Westpac, Lambton Quay Branch, Account Number 030502 0337025 00

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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