



WYCOMBE REFUGEE PARTNERSHIP

NEWSLETTER MAY 2021



RECOGNITION OF OUR WORK

A new award

Wycombe Refugee Partnership was honoured to receive this award from the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire. We were delighted to find that two of the other three recipients from South Bucks were our partner organisation Seerah Today and our colleague Refi Shafi, the Chairman of WISE (Wycombe Islamic Society).



NEW ADMINISTRATOR FOR WRP

Welcome to Veronika

Wycombe Refugee Partnership has just one paid member of staff – a part-time Administrator. Hannah Underwood is leaving the job to take on a fuller role with Asylum Welcome in Oxford. We are hugely grateful for all she has done over the last three years to support us and to set up systems to make Wycombe Refugee Partnership run smoothly. Her successor is Veronika Adam Svarcova, who has a Masters from the University of Vienna and who speaks six languages, including Arabic. She introduces herself here:



I am excited to be joining Wycombe Refugee Partnership and hope to carry on the great work Hannah has done. I am also keen to bring my own knowledge and experience to this role. With my experience of working in the admin sector for two international corporations for more than seven years I would like to contribute to the administrative part of WRP and help create effective and safe ways of working for all volunteers and individuals supported by the charity. My academic background includes

Political Science and German and Arabic Language and I am sure I will be able to bring my knowledge into the everyday activities of WRP.

Since summer 2020, I have been very active as a volunteer in Buckinghamshire, primarily at the Wycombe Food Hub, where I led the establishment of the community bazaar. Beside the Food Hub, I have been working as a befriender and support worker with vulnerable individuals with the Oxford based charity Sanctuary Hosting and the Slough Council initiative Building Futures Together.

An invitation to join the Marlow Refugee Action **ON THE MOVE** challenge!

Whether you walk, cycle, run or swim, MRA invite you to join our challenge to track how many kilometres we can cover together, and see how far we can get along the 4.288 km virtual route from Damascus in Syria to Marlow. Some are devoting a month – 20 May to 20 June – to tracking their efforts, while others are focusing on Refugee Week itself, 14–20 June 2021. All we ask is that you either donate £10 via our Virgin Money Giving page, or fundraise among your friends if you prefer, and keep track of your distance. At the end we will total up everyone's contributions and see how far we have all travelled together!

Donations can be made here: <https://bit.ly/3uU2wh>

And you can submit your kilometres here: <https://forms.gle/w1g77m4e82EXQUJE9>.

We hope you will join us!



For a period, I was also a German language tutor, teaching adults in a language school in Bratislava and also organising language conversation clubs for my colleagues at work.

In my free time, I enjoy cooking and baking, going into nature and playing football.

I hope to learn a lot from working with this fabulous charity and thank you all for welcoming me to the team. If you would like to reach out to me, you can email me on administrator@wycombe-refugees.org. My working hours are 12 noon – 5pm Monday to Friday.

I am very much looking forward to meeting you all in person soon.

MELLOR HOUSE

Home comforts

Mellor House, the halfway house provided by the Quakers, was a blessing to a Syrian family who arrived in early January and had to go straight into quarantine. Despite lockdown, we did our best to make them welcome and, with the help of Godstowe School, provided presents for the children. The parents told us then that their children had been crying on the journey at having had to leave their toys behind, but cheered up immediately when they saw the presents. Their mother, though, shed a few tears, because she was so touched by the gesture.

A newly married Palestinian couple has now taken over Mellor House. They have taken the initiative to repaint some of the walls and he has volunteered to shift furniture for us in his van – very much needed and appreciated. A WRP volunteer is working to help him find a job. His wife has not yet been granted refugee status, so is not allowed to do paid work.



The dining room of Mellor House

FINDING AN OCCUPATION

New Growth

That's right! Asylum-seekers are not allowed to do paid work! It would save the Treasury an estimated £98 MILLION if they were, but the hostile environment prevails and the Home Office's New Plan for Immigration threatens to make it even worse. Some of our asylum-seeking friends have been waiting for refugee status for over six years. They want to be part of the community and to have purpose, so the more enterprising among them have been volunteering doing various unpaid jobs. Some of them are also interested in gardening and one lady with green fingers has been brightening the environment with these pots.



TRANSLATORS NEEDED

Albanian and Amharic

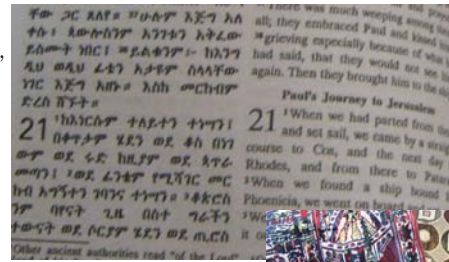
Do we have any speakers of Albanian or Amharic out there? We'd be very grateful for occasional help with translating/interpreting for people who speak little English.

PARTNERSHIPS

Acting Together with Loving Kindness

When we first came together as a group of mostly Christian and Muslim volunteers wanting to help refugees, we called ourselves Acting Together with Loving Kindness. It is an ongoing delight that, for example, one moment we are taking delivery of donated prayer mats and the next sourcing an Amharic-English parallel text New Testament!

When we registered as a charity, we felt that our name ought to make it clear that we were involved with refugees. We chose Wycombe Refugee Partnership because the word partnership echoes our original ethos. We have partnerships with a number of other organisations: let's just highlight three for now.



WISE (Wycombe Islamic Society) has a vigorous and generous welfare programme, from which many of our refugee and asylum-seeker families have benefitted. During Ramadan, they have been taking restaurant-cooked meals to families who wished to receive them and they have also been operating a hardship fund to which people could apply. Our volunteer Trina Richards has been making the referrals for asylum-seeking families who needed that help. WISE is taking Eid gifts round to the families they have helped in either of these ways.

Wycombe Food Hub has been extremely helpful in donating food to our families. Again, Trina has been the prime contact, but now we also have a link through Veronika, who is still volunteering there in the mornings, before doing her WRP job from 12-5pm each weekday.



The One Can Trust food bank is a real godsend to families and individuals in need. Our volunteer Stuart Lord regularly refers families to them on our behalf.

'I am Wycombe'

Lasana Shabazz, artist in residence at Wycombe Library, made recordings with four of our families. They were asked what Wycombe meant to them. Some replies were:

- 'Freedom of speech'
- 'Friendship'
- 'I feel I belong'
- 'Community'

One person was asked what 'love' meant to him and he said 'WRP' because of all he and his family had received from the charity.

I AM WYCOMBE

Contact us



www.wycombe-refugees.org



0845 643 2873



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Refugees Welcome in Wycombe

