

# WYCOMBE REFUGEE PARTNERSHIP



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## Queen bestows highest award on Wycombe Refugee Partnership

On Sunday 14 August, the Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Countess Howe, attended a ceremony in the grounds of Wycombe Museum to present the volunteers of Wycombe Refugee Partnership with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This prestigious honour recognises "Outstanding Commitment" for voluntary groups and is the group equivalent of an MBE. Since 2002, just 50 groups in Buckinghamshire have received this award.

Congratulations to all WRP volunteers! As so many of you were away on holiday, we are devoting most of this issue of the newsletter to a full account of a glorious event.



The Lord-Lieutenant's speech included the citation written by the assessors who recommended WRP for the award:

“Wycombe Refugee Partnership excels at providing wrap-around support for refugees and asylum seekers when their lives are at their lowest ebb. The distinctive make-up of Wycombe Refugee Partnerships trustees—50% Christian, 50% Muslim—provides leadership enabling volunteers to achieve a unique depth and breadth to their work.

Clients arrive describing themselves as feeling helpless and fearful of the future—outwardly trying to stay strong to protect their children, but inwardly feeling desolate. Wycombe Refugee Partnership changes that by providing physical and mental support and promoting social integration as they resettle in High Wycombe.



“The quality of volunteering is what this award is recognising.”



Chairman of WRP, Dr Michael Bowker, holds the certificate signed by the Queen for this group photo of WRP volunteers and supporters with the Lord-Lieutenant and her cadet.



The Lord-Lieutenant presented the QAVS trophy and certificate to two of the WRP trustees, Raz Baig (Treasurer) and Sue Butler (who leads the team of English tutors).

To date the lives of 22 refugee families with 97 members have been transformed through a variety of approaches.

Children and young people are helped to achieve their potential in education and to access sports and leisure facilities which help to reduce their sense of alienation and improves their mental health.

With the onset of COVID-19, Wycombe Refugee Partnership reached out to a further 67 refugees and asylum seekers who were in dire need by creating an effective Community Response Project. Food parcels were provided at first, then supermarket vouchers, and donated goods, and most importantly mental support was offered through befrienders who consistently cared and were 'there for them'.

The quality of volunteering is what this award is recognising. Wycombe Refugee Partnership has a clear structure within which volunteers are valued and supported.

In summary, this group of dedicated volunteers from diverse backgrounds provides the essential foundations of housing, employment and social support to enable otherwise destitute refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild decent lives and become productive members of UK society. Wycombe Refugee Partnership is truly a group of multifaith, multicultural volunteers 'Acting Together with Loving Kindness' to improve the lives of their clients and promote community cohesion."

**Dr Stephanie Rybak, Vice-Chair of WRP, responded to the Lord-Lieutenant's speech:**

"One of the most valued things which our volunteers offer is the sense that someone sees past the label of refugee or asylum seeker and cares what becomes of that person or family. When people have been bundled around by an impersonal system, when they are scared and traumatised and bewildered by the world in which they find themselves, that humanity is beyond price.

The so-called Golden Rule which appears in every major religion—and, indeed, Humanism—is that we should treat others as we'd wish to be treated ourselves. In volunteering, we are trying to put that into practice. It is a great joy to find that the loving kindness to which we aspire has been recognised in what we do. And so we are honoured and delighted to receive this Queen's Award for Voluntary Service."



Entertainment after the presentation.





## Scholarship success

Asylum seekers are not eligible for student finance and they are not allowed to do paid work. In case that didn't make access to university difficult enough, they are also charged International instead of Home Student fees: this can mean the difference between £9,000 and £25,000 per year. And that is just the fees—it doesn't cover accommodation.

WRP has been helping two young asylum seekers for the last year and we are thrilled to announce that they have both now achieved scholarships which will enable them to fulfil their dreams of university study. Huge congratulations to them both!

## Join our award winning charity!

We need the following volunteers:

- An accounts clerk (about four hours per week)
- Drivers to take young people to their sports activities (20p per mile petrol allowance)
- A co-ordinator for the activities and the drivers
- A housing officer, to help families into private rental accommodation

If you are interested in any of these roles, please fill out this form online and one of us will contact you to tell you what is involved: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2ttzp>

## Down on the farm

A HUGE thank you to Odds Farm Park for their donation of complimentary tickets for our families.

On a sunny Thursday in August, 20 ladies and 17 children had a wonderful day out at Odds Farm Park. From feeding the animals to tractor rides, playing in the enormous sandpit to the water play area—there was something for everyone—and the ladies had plenty of time to chat too!

One girl commented that this was the first time she had seen animals 'out of a book'.

Tackling social isolation and integrating families into the local community is an important part of our work. We are grateful to Odds Farm Park for providing an invaluable opportunity for a family day out.



Community Board  
High Wycombe



Community Board  
North West  
Chilterns



Photo by Ellis Garvey on Unsplash



### Contact us



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Refugees Welcome in Wycombe

