

INTERFAITH REFUGEE RESETTLERS (IRR) REPORT OCTOBER 2020

Just as the pandemic has created many difficulties for the world in general it has changed the experiences that IRR would have planned for our two sponsored families. Local events, visits to nearby tourist areas, picnic spots, museums, even the library all became difficult or impossible. The virtual world took over all our lives.

However, although Covid-19 limited activities and interactions, the warm sunny days of summer provided opportunities for backyard visits, walks to local parks and even a day trip to Niagara Falls with Hanaa's sister - a highlight of the summer, while the tragic explosion and subsequent difficult conditions in Lebanon created much concern over the situation of friends and extended family there. Fortunately there were no reports of serious injuries although property damage was extensive.

Marven continues to work in the auto mechanics field, and we continue to encourage Imane to work on her English language studies while at home with Noah – now eighteen months old and growing fast. Danielle and Sandibelle are considering university courses and campuses. Sandibelle will complete her grade 12 in 2021 and the two girls are hoping to begin their university education at the same time. Hanaa, while continuing to look for job opportunities, has been successful in getting her Canadian driver's license and with the help of her extended family is now the proud owner of a second hand car, making visits to doctors, the food bank and grocery stores much less challenging.

With less than four months remaining in our sponsorship of the two families, the IRR committee is busy helping them make plans for their transition into independent living. They will have much to consider in the coming months including deciding whether to relocate or to stay in the Aurora area. Rental housing costs are high in Aurora – they are considering other options.

Budgeting continues to be a concern. The IRR year of sponsorship ends on January 31, 2021. Moving costs, deposits on new rental accommodations and repayment of airfare are just some of the expenses which the families will be left to deal with. It has been a difficult year to find work and only Marven is fully employed at this time (Sandibelle has a part time job at Starbucks). Although the IRR would like to be able to offset some of these expenses our budget will not stretch to cover them.

The pandemic has certainly curtailed the possibilities for the families to explore their new surroundings and to partake in the activities which usually take place during the summer months in Aurora however, they are settling well into their new lives and are enthusiastic about the opportunities awaiting them. They are continuously grateful to their sponsors and are eager to integrate into their Canadian life.

Arriving in such unprecedented times, the families have worked diligently to adapt to their newly adopted country. We, as their sponsoring committee, are confident that they will do well in Canada and be an asset to their new home.

IRR COMMITTEE MEMBERS: George Easey (chair), Irene & John Clement, David Pilkey, Joyce Hagarty, Helen & Ivor Roberts, Jane Taylor (AUC); Barb Allan (Trinity), Jane Lennox, Susan Shaw, Mae Khamissa