

Refugee Family Reunification Trust Newsletter



UNHCR RECOGNISES OUR WORK

The Regional Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Thomas Albrecht, was in New Zealand earlier this year, and joined us at Wellington airport to welcome a family from Ethiopia. After many years apart, a mother was finally reunited with her daughter and two-year-old grandson. They were overwhelmed with emotion, and thankful at finally being together again. The Trust paid for the application fees and medicals required by Immigration New Zealand, and also for the airfares - a total of nearly \$8,000.

Mr Albrecht said "Helping refugee families get back together again is critically important. It is wonderful to see refugee families reunite in Wellington and I commend the work of the Refugee Family Reunification Trust."

This year marks another significant milestone for the Trust - we have now been helping refugees for more than 15 years. We have approved more than 460 applications for assistance from refugees in Wellington needing help with the costs of bringing their families to join them. Nearly 220 families have been reunited, including by paying the airfares to Wellington for around 600 family members - many of whom were children and young people. Put simply, without our help many of these families could never have overcome the financial challenges inherent in the immigration process. It is very rewarding to see so many families back together again after such long separations, and to know that the Trust has played a vital part in successful, and life-changing, outcomes.

Since the Trust was established, we have raised more than \$1,440,000 for 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 100% of donations can be given to refugees. No remuneration is paid to the Trustees, and the Trust does not receive any government funding. Separate funding is obtained specifically for unavoidable administration costs (such as audit costs, postage, envelopes, printing the annual newsletter etc), and we are able to keep these to a bare minimum due to our reliance on unpaid volunteers.

The Trust is a pure charity - donors are assured that every dollar they give will go directly to help refugees. A number of our donors have identified this as an important factor in the decision to support us.

By nationality, the families who have been assisted by the Trust were originally from Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Cambodia, Liberia, Myanmar, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Banda Ache. Many of these families were living in refugee camps or equally appalling situations.

Refugee Family Reunification Trust
P.O. Box 27342
Marion Square
Wellington 6141

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PATRONS

Cardinal Thomas Williams
Dame Fiona Kidman
Niborom Young
Kim Hill

TRUSTEES

Amanda Calder Chairperson
Therese O'Connell
Ismail Ibrahim
Brigid Feehan
Philippa Meachen



Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them Film Fundraiser

Pauatahanui Anglican Parish (St Andrew's, Plimmerton; St Alban's, Pauatahanui; and St Mark's, Pukerua Bay), together with St Mary's Anglican Church, Whitby, and St Anne's Anglican Church, Whitby, hosted a movie fundraiser at the Pauatahanui Lighthouse in November. At a sell-out event, parish and community members from around the Porirua area were interested to hear about the work of the Trust, and were captivated by Fahima's account of her family's journey to New Zealand, and of the significant support provided by the Trust to enable her family members to join her here (see Fahima's story on the next page). Proceeds of the evening, including ticket sales, raffles, auctions and donations, look set to exceed \$1,500. We are especially grateful for the contributions of the sponsors: My Food Bag, Moana Road; Fiona's Hair Design, Tawa; and Lighthouse Cinema, Pauatahanui; as well as parish and community members who generously contributed their time and skills, including items for the auction. We thank you all for your enthusiasm, kindness, warm hospitality and support.

I, Daniel Blake Film Fundraiser

For the fifth successive year, the Justice, Peace and Development Group of Otari Catholic Parish (which includes St Thomas More Church in Wilton/Northland and St Teresa's Church in Karori) has organised a fundraising movie. This year, the movie "I, Daniel Blake" screened to a full house at the Penthouse Theatre - raising \$3,170. The total raised over the five years is an impressive \$14,920. We truly appreciate the strong and sustained commitment to helping refugees shown by this Parish, and we thank everyone for their support. In addition, the Trustees wish to thank 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), New World Karori, Countdown Crofton Downs, Gipps St Deli, Gipps St Butchery, One Fat Bird (Marsden Village), Streaks Ahead (Northland), Marsden Books and Marsden Village Cafe.



Housing for Refugees

The current housing shortage across New Zealand is also affecting new refugee families arriving in Wellington. A number of refugee families are in overcrowded situations, and struggling to navigate our complex system for finding suitable housing. To make matters worse, Immigration New Zealand appears to be increasingly likely to reject applications under the Refugee Family Support Category ("RFSC") where the refugee sponsor cannot guarantee suitable accommodation for their family.

The Trust works closely with partner agencies in an attempt to identify suitable housing options for refugees. One success story is the model housing project between Dwell Housing Trust and the Sisters of Compassion, which the Trust supports on a non-financial basis. A flat in Island Bay provides transitional housing for refugee families resettling here. Since this project started in 2012, five families arriving in Wellington under the RFSC have been helped including families of six, nine and ten originally from Somalia; a family of six originally from Afghanistan; and a family of six from Eritrea.

Sr Rachel provides ongoing support and assistance to each new family, as necessary. This support includes fully furnishing the home, providing food parcels, clothing, helping with appointments and meetings, enrolments at schools and English classes. Where a refugee family has faced short-term financial difficulties, the Home of Compassion Sisters have subsidised the rent.

This housing project is an innovative and Enjoying the Island Bay flat practical way to support a refugee family arriving to start a new life here. However, this flat can only help one family at a time, and more homes are needed. Landlords willing to rent a property to a new refugee family at a reasonable rate are desperately needed.

St Joseph's Parish in Mt Victoria has also recognised this housing need, and supported two refugee families - from Rwanda and Eritrea - with housing in a parish property at low rent.

The Sisters of St Joseph, a Catholic religious women's order, are also working on a similar project to provide a home for refugees in Miramar, Wellington. They are in the process of fully renovating and furnishing a four bedroom house in preparation for a refugee family due to arrive soon.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

We remain extremely grateful to all our donors, without whom we could not have successfully reunited so many deserving families. The ongoing support of generous individuals and charitable organisations was critical to our success during the past year. 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; the Archdiocesan Tindall Allocations Committee; Nikau Foundation; Tai Shan Foundation; Yvonne and Peter Cottier; and Queen Margaret College. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Many volunteers have kindly given their time, skills and enthusiasm to help run the Trust, to organise fundraising or to help new families with their resettlement. Special thanks to our honorary accountant, Alison Dyer, and to the Trust's auditor, Peter Scholtens. Multicultural Learning and Support Services support us by sharing their mail box number. We would also like to thank Phil Dyer for taking the photographs we use. Thanks to Lesley Hooper for helping to manage the database. David Colls again generously donated his time to format this newsletter. Sr Rachel kindly helps new families with their resettlement. Simon Calder manages the website and database. Simpson Grierson provides pro bono legal support. Your assistance is invaluable.



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 Wellington 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

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

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

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

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

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Refugee Family Reunification Trust
PO Box 27342, Marion Square, Wellington 6141.
Telephone: (04) 475 7994 or (04) 384 1992
Fax: (04) 475 7934
Email: acalder@xtra.co.nz
Website: refugeefamilyreunificationtrust.org.nz



For privacy reasons, refugees' stories and photos are not included on our website.