



Suffolk Refugee Support Newsletter

Summer 2016



www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk
38 St Matthew's Street, IPSWICH, Suffolk IP1 3EP



Lives changed

The theme of Refugee Week this year is 'Welcome', and at Suffolk Refugee Support we are preparing to greet the next Syrian families to arrive in Ipswich as part of the UK government's resettlement programme. We are making sure their accommodation is comfortably furnished, and will support and orientate them upon their arrival. Most importantly, along with the wider community, we will provide a warm and welcoming environment in which they can take the first small steps towards rebuilding their lives. We have also been working hard supporting the first Syrian families who made their new homes in Ipswich earlier this year, and they are settling in well to a very different way of life. We thought you'd like to hear from one of our new arrivals in his own words. This is Goran:

"I was studying Physics at Al-Furat University in Deir ez-Zor for 2 years. In 2011 the war got worse. I saw pupils die, and I had to stop studying. I left, at first staying with people in different parts of the country, but in the end I had to leave for Iraq to become a refugee because it was not safe to go home.

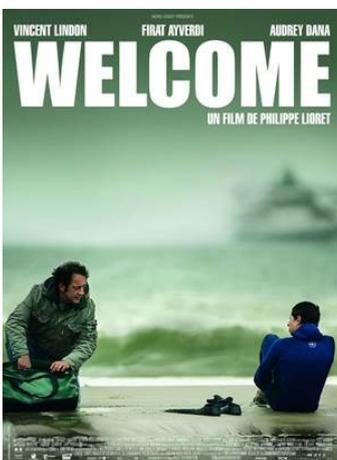
In March I came to England. Things are different, the weather and food! Life changed, there is no war and I go to study, I can go to the park, I can go anywhere with no problem. All people in Ipswich are friendly and I've made friends. Suffolk Refugee Support are lovely and they have helped me. Everyone is good, they help Syrians and other people coming from war. I am starting a new life. I now go running, to the gym, to English class – Suffolk Refugee Support helped me with this. I'm starting guitar lessons as I used to learn before. I want to improve my English and complete university, physics maybe or engineering, I'd like to be a teacher or engineer because I like buildings."



We hope you enjoy this newsletter and finding out more about us, and maybe you'd like to get involved in some way - we'd love to hear from you.



WELCOME
REFUGEE WEEK 20-26 JUNE 2016



Next week is Refugee Week – a national event celebrating the contribution refugees make to UK society and promoting understanding of refugee issues. The theme this year is 'Welcome' – particularly appropriate as Suffolk has recently welcomed our first resettled Syrian refugees – and to mark the week we have arranged a **special screening of the film 'Welcome' at Ipswich Film Theatre, 7.30 pm on Monday 20 June**. The film highlights the plight of refugees in Calais and their attempts to reach the UK – a subject sadly all too topical. Members of the SRS team will be around post-show to talk about our work and the refugee situation locally. Book your tickets here: ipswichfilmtheatre.savoyssystems.co.uk/ipswichFilmTheatre.dll/

Although Refugee Week this year coincides with the small matter of the EU referendum, look out for coverage in the Ipswich Star/EADT and on the BBC Radio Suffolk breakfast show on Monday 20th, including an interview with a Syrian refugee resettled in Ipswich. Look out too for our social media postings during the week, where we will be highlighting some of the achievements and success stories of refugees in Suffolk. We will also have a stand at the Multicultural Day at Ipswich Library on Sat 25th. Thanks also to the children of Halifax Primary School for the welcome cards they are making for the week.

SRS making a real difference in the lives of refugees

Good News Stories

Fatima and Ali, two refugees from Iran, were interviewed by Year 13 students at Ormiston Academy in Sudbury earlier this year at SRS office. Their interview was included within the drama piece, 'Immigration: What does it mean to you?' which the students performed at

Woodbridge Drama Festival on 3rd June - and it won the Festival Award! Fatima and Ali, with their son, attended the play and thoroughly enjoyed the piece and the warm welcome from the students. Well done everyone for a great play, and raising awareness of refugee issues so sensitively.



All three of the Eritrean lads playing for Ransomes Sports FC, with the help of our Men's Sports and Social Group, have shown great improvement this season. One of them won the award for the most improved player and has been asked to sign up for the men's first team next season. All three have also integrated well and Clem, our Men's Group Coordinator, is rightly proud of their achievements.



Pigs Gone Wild is a mass participation art event, with an interactive sculpture trail featuring 39 larger-than-life pigs taking over the streets of Ipswich this summer.

As part of the project, artist Joy Pirkle met with Suffolk Refugee Support's International Women's Group on two occasions for a two hour workshop, exploring themes and formulating designs through the sessions. The resulting pig sculpture includes an explanation of the word 'Refugee' - a noun meaning a place that gives shelter or safety from pursuit, danger, trouble or unhappiness.

The pigs can be found around Ipswich from 22nd June—2nd September, and are raising money for St Elizabeth Hospice, Ipswich.

You can follow the Pigs Gone Wild trail here: www.pigsgonewild.co.uk

SRS in the News

Suffolk Refugee Support's project tackling FGM in Suffolk has identified a lack of mental health services locally for survivors of this awful practice. FGM stands for Female Genital Mutilation, a practice illegal within the UK but still carried out amongst many communities around the world. Survivors currently have to travel to London to access peer support, and there are only a handful of counsellors in Ipswich with specialist FGM training. We are now working to fill this gap and have launched our FGM Survivors Network, a forum where survivors of FGM can share experiences and offer each other advice and support and also access mental health services provided by Suffolk Health and Wellbeing. It is hoped that this network will improve the mental health of FGM survivors and encourage other victims to come forward. The realities of the practice can make it a difficult subject to broach, so we were pleased to have the cooperation of the Ipswich Star in publishing the testimony of an FGM survivor, and details of our project to tackle the crime in Suffolk. We should stress that FGM is in no way an issue specific to refugees – the practice just happens to be prevalent in a number of refugee-producing countries. You can read the Star's report [here](#). For more details of our project and the Survivors Network contact Jemma: jlynch@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

Following the success (and national TV coverage on Countryfile!) of our trip to Clinks Care Farm, we were delighted to be contacted by Fulibroch Dairy – a small-holding near Bures St Mary with pedigree Toggenburg goats – offering to host us. So it was that on a beautiful spring day we took a group of refugees from Syria, Iraqi Kurdistan and Eritrea to the dairy, this time accompanied by ITV Anglia. The benefits to our clients of a day of meaningful activity in the fresh air are enormous, as shown both by the smiling faces and the feedback we've had. Huge thanks to Fulibroch Dairy for their hospitality and to Ipswich School for providing the transport. You can watch the ITV report here: www.itv.com/news/anglia/update/2016-05-24/charity-helping-refugees-re-connect-with-the-natural-world/



Huge thanks to some special people supporting refugees in Suffolk

As an organisation, we rely entirely on grants and donations, so we have been very moved recently by all the generous people making donations to help vulnerable refugees in Suffolk, and by all those who are putting such time and effort into raising funds for our work. Three people in particular deserve our special thanks.



Firstly, the sun shone on Kate Billingham, our wonderful volunteer, who pedalled the 60-mile Suffolk Sunrise cycle ride on Sunday 8th May. Spurred on by all your generous sponsorship, she completed the course in just over four hours!

Our friend Anna from La Tour Cycle Cafe had her head shaved recently in aid of refugees. The event was covered by BBC Radio Suffolk. Thankfully the weather has warmed up a bit now so Anna isn't feeling the cold so much!



A fitting tribute to a kind and generous man;

We were tremendously moved and grateful when Ali Rose got in touch with us to say that she and her family had decided to take donations for SRS in memory of her husband Steve, who recently passed away. So far the appeal has raised a staggering £1300, and the support this enables us to give vulnerable refugees will be a fitting tribute from Steve's friends and colleagues to the man and his values.

We asked Ali to tell us a little more in her own words.

Steve was a man who believed everyone should be treated fairly, but he was always particularly motivated by those who had fallen on hard times. He was lucky to grow up in a loving family who worked hard and provided a roof over their heads and food on the table. As a husband and father he aspired to and succeeded in doing just the same. My mother and her family had once been refugees themselves in the mid 1930s and were fortunate to escape Hitler and flee to Europe and America.

Steve was not a great believer in charities generally as he felt some funds should be provided by government and was concerned those really in need did not benefit. However he would happily pass his change directly to a beggar in the street. When I came to work in Children's Centres a couple of years ago he was moved by my stories of local charities that provided for local people in ways that were most needed. Steve was always very politically aware of issues worldwide, and as the Syrian refugee crisis became headline news we had offered to house a refugee in our small spare bedroom. The news would often bring tears to his eyes.

When Steve was diagnosed with his brain tumour we thought we had more time than we did to discuss arrangements, but unfortunately this was not to be. Our three children and I had lots of decisions to make but we all agreed that it would be much more sensible to take donations for a worthwhile cause than to accept lots of flowers which would soon perish. The choice of Suffolk refugees was foremost in my mind, because of all Steve felt and believed, and the children totally agreed. What has surprised us – and Steve would undoubtedly have been gobsmacked – is the number of people who both donated or cared enough about Steve to show their respect. We know Steve would be delighted to think he has contributed to the settlement and well-being of refugees in general but even more so knowing that he has helped people locally. He loved Suffolk and I feel strongly that he would be hoping refugees from any country come to love it as he did and that they are being welcomed warmly as human beings just like you and I.



Steve & Ali Rose, before Steve died just eight weeks after being diagnosed with a brain tumour.

If you would like to make a donation to support refugees in Suffolk, you can through [SRS's MyDonate page](#).

A huge thank you from Jodi, SRS Syrian Resettlement Programme Coordinator, to all who have given us donations for newly arrived families. Special thanks to Samaritan's Purse for the children's school bags—a wonderful welcome gift. Also to Emmaus for offering furniture and PAT testing, Ipswich Furniture Project for toys and PAT testing, FIND for donating and transporting divan beds, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for welcome food parcels, St Matthew's Church and Woodbridge Ladies Thursday Group for donating cleaning and hygiene items, Paul Vogel of Woodbridge for the bedding sets and Ipswich Buses for the welcome bus passes to help the families navigate around the town.

Spotlight on SRS Volunteers & Staff

Volunteers Matter

Welcome to new volunteers Safiya, Clare, Gwen, Sarah and another new Clare! Welcome back to Neil – it's lovely to have your help with Men's Group.



Trustee Oversight

Our trustees work hard behind the scenes, giving their time to make sure the organisation runs smoothly and plans for the future. We don't thank them often enough. So we would like to put on record our huge appreciation for the tireless efforts of Alan Blackshaw, trustee and founding member of Suffolk Refugee Support, who recently celebrated his 80th birthday! Thank you Alan, from all our staff, clients, volunteers and fellow trustees.

Staff Changes

Welcome to Vivienne Dubois, our new Employment and Training Support Worker, and to Meg White-Thomson, our International Women's Group Coordinator.

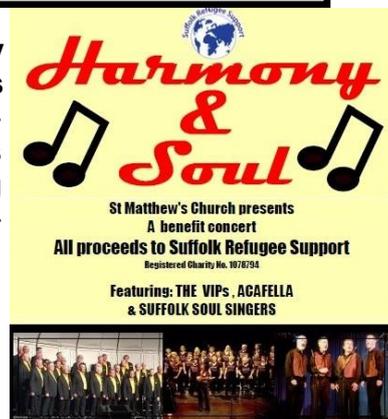
Thanks to Nadine for her work supporting our FGM project, we will miss you.

Student Placements

We were sad to say goodbye to Martha, our social work student, who has helped us enormously during her 70-day placement with us. Good luck with your final year!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Harmony & Soul Concert – We're delighted to announce that on **Saturday 2 July** an exciting line-up of musical talent will be filling **St Matthew's Church, Ipswich**, with sweet sounds in support of refugees. This special benefit concert will feature the Suffolk Soul Singers, the VIPs (men's harmony chorus) and Acafella (barbershop quartet), with all proceeds going to the work of Suffolk Refugee Support. Tickets are available from the parish office (Adults £8, Children £4) on 01473 251630 or by email: parishoffice@smast.org.uk <http://www.grapevinelive.co.uk/event/harmony-soul-concert/>



'EYE FOR IPSWICH' Art Exhibition



Recently, we encouraged 12 refugee clients to attend the 'Eye for Ipswich' print making workshops run by Oyster Press. Everyone who took part thoroughly enjoyed it and produced some really eye-catching work, culminating in an exhibition of work from **Friday 24 June - 7 July at Ipswich Library**. The exhibition will be accompanied by testimony from some of our clients describing what they gained from the experience. On Saturday 25 June from 11.00-3.00 at the library, as part of their Multicultural Day, you can watch a demonstration of printmaking and create your own piece of art.

Please visit our brand new WEBSITE

We're launching a brand new website in time for Refugee Week! We think it's a fresher, more modern and uncluttered design, with better accessibility to our clients and more mobile-friendly (as this is how many of our clients access the internet). And the whole thing has been put together at minimal cost thanks to the amazing skills of web designer and SRS volunteer Henrik Anderson. Please do visit it and let us know what you think - go to www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk.

We hope you've enjoyed our latest newsletter—we'd love to hear from you with your feedback or if you'd like to find out further information. If you received this newsletter indirectly, and would like to join our mailing list, please email our administrator: twright@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

Thank you again for all your support, donations and volunteering - we really couldn't manage without you!