



Suffolk Refugee Support Summer 2019 Newsletter

www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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Refugee Week Report



We recently celebrated Refugee Week with a series of events, talks and displays across Suffolk. We combined the theme of 'You, me & those who came before' with our 20th anniversary in a celebration event at La Tour Cycle Café attended by well over 200 clients, staff, trustees, volunteers and supporters past and present, including some of those who helped set up SRS in 1999 and some of the first refugees we supported. One of the highlights of a joyful, inspiring evening was the singing of our International Women's Group (pictured above, with the Music in our Bones group), which you can [listen to here!](#) We also gave a talk on our 20 years of refugee support at the University of Suffolk, an assembly for 300 students at Rushmere Hall Primary School and a series of workshops at Northgate High School. There were refugee-themed displays at Aldeburgh Bookshop and Woodbridge and Ipswich Libraries, and the story of a Syrian family we support featured on [BBC Suffolk here](#).



I just want to thank you and your amazing team for such a great birthday party for SRS last Thursday. It was such a happy occasion...and it was very special to have so many of the people you have helped over the years there and for the rest of us to see for ourselves just what can be achieved with kindness and the right guidance.
(Roz Emerson, High Sheriff of Suffolk)

Thank you so very much for such a wonderful evening. It was a real tribute to the amazing work you do at Suffolk Refugee Support. The speeches were inspirational and very emotive, and the food was delicious.

Supported by:



20th Anniversary Profiles—Izaak's Story

Throughout our 20th anniversary year we are profiling some of the people we have supported in Suffolk over the past two decades.

Izaak comes from the Darfur region of western Sudan. In 2004, as part of the systematic killing of the Darfuri population, his village was burned to the ground and his farm destroyed by the 'Janjaweed' militia, supported by the Sudanese government. He was separated from his wife and children and detained, but after a few days managed to escape.

Izaak went back to the village to find his livestock dead and no sign of his family. He walked across mountains at night and escaped Sudan on board a ship in a lorry carrying goats and sheep. He did not know where he was going or whether his family were alive or dead.

He arrived at the port of Felixstowe in late 2004 and claimed asylum. The following year he learned his wife and children were still alive, although he did not know where. Suffolk Refugee Support helped Izaak, through the Red Cross tracing service, to find his family, and they were reunited in 2007. Today, Izaak is a British citizen, lives in Ipswich with his family, and still pops into our office sometimes for a cup of coffee. The Janjaweed militia who burned his village 15 years ago have recently been implicated in the killing of peaceful protesters in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.



Poems by a young refugee

Yagavi is a 12-year-old refugee and talented poet! She recited these two poems at our recent 20th anniversary event. You can read her family's powerful story in our new [Refugee Stories booklet here](#).

Bright side

*If life was like an ocean,
You might think it would be peaceful,
But remember waves come and go.*

*If life was like a plant,
You might think you would grow forever,
But remember plants will wilt one day.*

*If life was like the sun,
You might think you will shine for ever,
But remember the clouds may block your shine.*

*If life was like the rain,
You might think that you will survive forever,
But remember there is a time it has to hit the ground.*

*Remember these words:
Troubles come and go,
but give happiness to others, like a plant,*

*Spotlight isn't the key,
there should be no word like "can't".*

*You fall down and crash,
but you have to get up,
they treat you like trash,
but you should treat them nice,*



*Be like the rain which is sweet,
Not the poison harmful,*

*be the flower that is beautiful,
not the person that is spiteful.*

Refugee

*Refugees flee from land to land,
Wishing and hoping for a helpful hand,*

*Fear and sadness in their eyes,
Can't you hear those voices cry?*

*Kindness and compassion,
A world full of love,*

*Is that too much to ask for,
to be free as a dove?*



Can you help celebrate the achievements of refugees we've worked with over the last 20 years, and help Suffolk Refugee Support to continue supporting refugees in the future?

Here are 20 ways you can promote positive stories and understanding about refugees, and raise funding towards vital services this year:

1. Learn 20 words or how to count from 1-20 in a refugee language (e.g. Arabic, Kurdish)
2. Ask 20 friends to Like the [Suffolk Refugee Support Facebook page](#)
3. Share a 20 second message of welcome for refugees in Suffolk (perhaps using 20 words in a refugee language!)
4. Give it up for 20—give up something for 20 days and ask friends and family to sponsor you
5. Take it up for 20—learn 20 new things this year and get sponsored for each one
6. Organise a sponsored 20 mile walk (or bike ride) to show solidarity with refugees who often have to walk long distances to safety
7. Sign up for a challenge event and get 20 people to sponsor you to raise funds for SRS
8. Pick up a copy of our 20th anniversary Refugee Stories booklet to give to an interested friend, family member or work colleague
9. Have a sponsored 20 (or 200) minutes silence—could be a good one for the kids!
10. Ask 20 friends or family members to [join our mailing list](#) so they too can receive our newsletter and event invitations
11. Raise 20 in 20—team up with colleagues for imaginative ways to raise £20 in 20 minutes
12. Have a 1990's dress up day at work—dress like they did in 1999 when SRS was founded
13. Bake 20 cakes and sell them to friends, family or colleagues
14. Take part in a sponsored swim of 20 metres, 20 lengths or 2 km
15. Ask people you know to donate 20 books they no longer want and sell them at a book sale
16. Send 20 SRS Christmas cards, all designed by a young refugee in Suffolk
17. Make a lasting difference by [signing up to give £20 monthly](#)—your donation will make a real difference to vulnerable refugees through SRS services
18. Share [these top 20 facts from the Refugee Council](#) about refugees and asylum seekers with 20 friends
19. 20 tweets – help us spread the word by retweeting [SRS Twitter](#) posts or tagging us in yours
20. Play with the number 20—get imaginative with your 20-themed ideas!

If you need any support with fundraising ideas or events, please contact SRS fundraiser Karen, who can help you plan and promote your activities. And don't forget to let us know what you are doing to support refugees! We look forward to hearing from you.

EVENTS

We were thrilled recently that our amazing volunteer and ESOL student, Seraphine, won both the Inspirational and overall Outstanding Learner of the Year awards at the Suffolk Adult Learners Awards at the University of Suffolk. She has worked so hard, overcome many challenges and thoroughly deserves this recognition! Tony, who also volunteers with us, was runner-up as Volunteer of the Year and Maria, with whom we have worked for a long time, won Tutor of the Year for her work with refugees through the WEA (Workers' Educational Association). Huge congratulations to all three, and thanks to Michaela and Catherine from our ESOL team (pictured right with Seraphine) for all their hard work. You can read more about the event and [Seraphine's inspiring story here](#).



Suffolk Wildlife Trust have worked with us to plan activities for young refugees over the summer. The first activity was in Holywells Park, where the young people had fun pond dipping and were amazed to see how much variety could be found in the water, from leeches and tadpoles to pond snails and fish. The activities ended with them making their own rafts and seeing which could get from one end of the pond to the other the fastest! This week we will be going to Christchurch Park to see what wildlife is around at night time, complete with bat detectors and night vision equipment!



We were also pleased to take part recently in Strengthening Refugee Advocacy Training in Nottingham, as one of 15 key refugee support organisations in the East Midlands & East of England, organised by the Lloyds Bank Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy. It was great to share experiences and best practice with organisations doing similar work to ourselves across the region.

Training and education

Through our employment work funded through the LEP and the National Lottery Community Fund we have been supporting a young entrepreneur, Maria (right), who is in the process of launching her own handmade lingerie business—Maria Callisto. We helped her run focus groups for women to give feedback on her products. We will be running more of these events in the future so if you are interested in attending or would like to be added to Maria's mailing list, please contact Jodi: jpeck@suffolkrefugee.org.uk. We would like to thank the Ipswich Soroptimists for supporting Maria with a bursary to help with some of her set-up costs.



We recently ran an IT course in partnership with the WEA, giving an introduction to resettled refugees with little or no experience with computers. The course was taught by SRS team member, Fran Ciotaki, with interpreting help from an SRS volunteer. Two refugees, one well established in Britain and the other recently resettled, volunteered as classroom assistants, using their knowledge of computers to help their peers. The WEA also recently ran a level 1 community interpreting course, which was a great opportunity for refugees with a good level of English to see what it takes to become a professional interpreter. Many of those in the class already have experience volunteering as interpreters for family and friends.

Resettlement Update

We continue our intensive casework with refugees resettled in Suffolk as part of the UK government's resettlement programmes. Recently we have taken part in a Men's Shed Project, run by ActivLives, for resettled refugees wanting to get away from the routine of appointments and learn and socialise in a practical setting. The group designed and built an impressive bird cage, numerous bird boxes, boxes for treats and candle holders—all to be donated to good causes. Whether maintaining carpentry skills, learning English in a practical way, or just socialising over an activity, the group enjoyed it and were very grateful to ActivLives.



We have also been working with the WEA and others on IT and Health and Safety courses as well as a joint project with Volunteering Matters around training for volunteer placements in local cultural institutions for speakers of English as a second language. Over the summer we are referring three families to Dance East workshops for parents with young children and hosting women's health walks in Christchurch Park. Our resettlement team recently conducted agency visits to Norwich and a London women's support network, and one of the resettled Syrian families we support shared their story of how they narrowly escaped a sniper attack in Damascus with [BBC Suffolk here](#).

UNHCR Global Trends Report

The UNHCR (the UN's refugee agency) released its annual Global Trends report recently, and once again it shows record levels of displacement worldwide. You can read the [full report here](#). Its key findings include:

- 70.8 million people forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of conflict, persecution, violence or human rights violations at the end of 2018
- 25.9 million of these are refugees (i.e. outside their own country)
- 13.6 million people were newly displaced from their homes in 2018, the equivalent of 37,000 every day
- Nearly 4 out of every 5 refugees live in a country neighbouring their own, while only 16% are hosted by countries in developed regions
- Children under 18 continue to make up around half of the world's refugees



New Refugee Stories booklet

To mark our 20th anniversary, we have produced a special edition of our Refugee Stories booklet, featuring new accounts of the experiences of refugees we have supported from Sri Lanka, Rwanda (on the 25th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide) and Syria. You can read the stories in full [on our website here](#).



REFUGEE
STORIES



Good news!

Those who receive our newsletter regularly might have read the story of Osama Gaweesh, a journalist and TV presenter from Egypt, who we have worked with closely since his arrival in Ipswich as an asylum seeker. We're delighted to report that recently Osama and his parents received a positive decision on their asylum claim! You can hear Osama speaking about his experiences on [BBC Suffolk here](#).

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: mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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