

Living with and Learning About Refugees

During his 30-hour per week paid internship at Welcome Home, Noel Bedford was responsible for supporting refugees and building relationships with them as they got used to living in Canada. He learned a lot along the way, including that Canada accepts two streams of refugees—convention refugees and refugee claimants.* “Most often we dealt with refugee claimants.” This is because there are no government programs to address their shelter, clothing, and food needs when they arrive. Noel says, “People come from, lots of different places for lots of different reasons... I interacted with people from Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Venezuela, Pakistan, Haiti, Iraq, Honduras, and Colombia.”

He adds, “It was a unique experience living at Welcome Home.” A highlight was hearing “random cheering” from the women’s floor up above the men’s unit where he lived. “They would break into cheering and dancing when they got good news that their refugee claim had been accepted and they could build a future in Canada.”

At first, Noel wasn’t sure if he would be good at relating to the refugees. “It was easier than I expected and I did better than I thought.” He answered people’s questions and spent time with the residents—especially the men. Noel went through the first four books of The New Testament with one of the male residents who wasn’t a Christian. “He wanted to work on his English and to learn about the Bible.”

Noel saw God in the supportive relationships that developed among residents from different cultures and religions. A special time for many in the house was the weekly Sing and Pray times, which Noel, and the female intern, Alana Westervelt, and program coordinator, Stephanie Schreuders, led.

“Welcome Home is important because it helps people coming to Canada from difficult circumstances, who don’t speak the language, to access the services they need. Welcome Home provides community and helps them build friendships with people who are ready to welcome them.”



Noel Bedford (left) and Alana Westervelt were the male and female interns at Welcome Home in 2018.

If you are interested in becoming an intern at Welcome Home in May 2019, please contact Sharon Schmidt at sschmidt@rayofhope.net for more details.

About Refugees in Canada

Canada recognizes two types of refugees:

1. Convention Refugees:

People who have been sponsored by the Government of Canada as Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) or by a private group (PSRs) before they arrive in Canada.

2. Refugee Claimants:

People who flee a country or situation and apply for asylum AFTER reaching Canada by land, sea or air. Each one enters a legal process to confirm their identity and prove their refugee claim, which would allow them to stay in Canada.”

Ride for Refuge THANK YOU!

During the Ride for Refuge on Saturday, September 29th, 2018

113 riders and walkers on 16 teams in the Waterloo Region and Niagara Region, with the help of 519 donors, raised \$35,211 toward the work of Welcome Home Refugee House.



Program Director Sharon Schmidt is pictured far left with her team of refugees, volunteers, and staff from Welcome Home who participated in the event.

