

# TOGETHER PROJECT

[www.togetherproject.ca](http://www.togetherproject.ca) | a project of Tides Canada

## ABOUT

Together Project, a project of Tides Canada, connects refugee newcomers and Canadians to build stronger, more integrated communities. We match “Welcome Groups” of five or more volunteers with newly arrived refugees to foster social connections that support refugee integration. We also work with our partners to host community events and programs to increase newcomer social inclusion.

Together Project aims to develop evidence-driven programs that will 1) increase refugee social capital 2) mitigate newcomer social isolation and 3) help build more welcoming communities through volunteer engagement in refugee integration.

## WELCOME GROUP PROGRAM

The Welcome Group Program incorporates best practices and adds value to other models of volunteer engagement with refugee integration as follows:

- Newcomer-defined goals for the match
- Group matches of five or more volunteers rather than family-to-family or individual-to-family matches
- Volunteer training sessions, manuals, and other resources
- Six months of match support, monitoring, and evaluation by a Together Project staff member
- Volunteer connection to newcomers’ settlement caseworker
- “Cultural Ambassadors” to provide linguistic and cultural interpretation for matches with low language levels
- WhatsApp to facilitate regular communication within the match and remote support
- Preference matching between volunteers and newcomers, utilizing criteria like geographic proximity, family size, capacity, and other preferences
- No financial barrier to participation
- Shorter wait time for a match than the wait time for private sponsorship.

Originally framed as a way for refugees to form friendships and gain access to social networks, Together Project’s Welcome Group Program has since evolved to engage community volunteers to help refugee households address specific integration challenges as the basis for meaningful social connection.

# FOSTERING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS TO SUPPORT REFUGEE INTEGRATION

**“WITHIN MY COMMUNITY, I ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP NEWCOMERS’ SETTLE AND INTEGRATE. MY ADVICE IS TO SEE THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY. WHEN PEOPLE COME FROM ANOTHER PART OF THE WORLD, THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH YOU. YOU CAN LEARN A LOT FROM THEM. THERE IS NOTHING TO LOSE BY MAKING THIS EFFORT TO WELCOME SOMEONE TO CANADA BUT THERE IS A LOT TO GAIN.”**

Mohammed, a Welcome Group Volunteer



## OUTCOMES

Per 2018 surveys, evidence demonstrating the current success of the Welcome Group Model is as follows:

- 90% of GAR household respondents reported feeling that their challenges were being addressed through Welcome Group support;
- 70% reported feeling better connected to Canadians through meeting their Welcome Group;
- 80% reported that their Welcome Group was helpful in making them feel more independent;
- 90% of volunteers feel they have a good understanding of the challenges their matched newcomers are facing;
- 90% of volunteers report having learned more about refugee integration through their match.

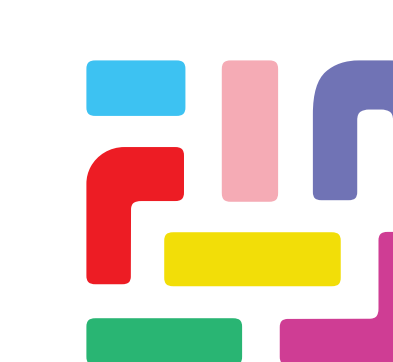
**“DURING MY TIME WITH THE WELCOME GROUP, I STARTED OFF THINKING ABOUT THE IMPACT I HOPED TO MAKE ON THE LIVES OF THIS NEWCOMER FAMILY. WHAT I DID NOT EXPECT WAS HOW MY LIFE WAS ABOUT TO BE TRANSFORMED AFTER GETTING TO KNOW THIS INCREDIBLY INTELLIGENT, BRAVE AND COMPASSIONATE FAMILY IN RETURN.”**

Zein, a Welcome Group Volunteer



## PROGRESS

- 110 households matched with Welcome Groups
- 500 newcomers + 525 volunteers participated in the Welcome Group Program
- 30 community events delivered with 25 community partners with 1,000 newcomer participants and 250 volunteer participants total
- 70 newcomer participants in the Ritz-Carlton Succeed Through Service Newcomer Hospitality Program over three years.



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## SUPPORTERS

