

# Refugee Focus

*Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan*

### Special Dates of Interest:

- March 21— International Day for the Elimination of Racism
- April 4— Refugee Rights Day
- June 30— World Refugee Day
- September 21— International Day of Peace
- September 28-30— Culture Days
- September 30— Prairie Prism

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## Waiting for Miracles

In 2012 I will be looking for miracles. I am a believer in miracles, small things that make a huge difference in lives. I have my own experiences with miracles – where in very difficult situations there was an unexplained turn around of events that changed something pretty awful into a miraculous experience or self-discovery. Miracles come most often in unanticipated and unconventional ways, when desperation and hopelessness seem to be the order of the day; where logic, medicine, or common sense does not appear to be making the difference. But I believe that God works in us and through us to make miracles happen. And that to me is a miracle in itself.

In 2012 I will be looking for miracles in many different places: for compassionate

policies among our world leaders so that uprooted people can return home, or find a durable solution and reunite with their families. I will pray for a miracle that all wars will cease and respect, honor and dignity for all human beings will be foremost in the minds of our politicians and world leaders.

And here at home, I will search for miracles to turn apathy to action, for acts of kindness to replace mean spiritedness, for xenophobic attitudes to be replaced with mutual respect, and for "...the good news of great joy..." to be born again in all people.

In 2012 can we help to create miracles for the world's homeless? Can we work together to provide that sponsorship for refugees that will help create a miracle for one family at a



**Elaine Harder, Refugee Program Coordinator**

time? This is my hope and prayer for 2012.

## Can You Help?

MCC is in need of sponsors for Visa Office Referred and Joint Assisted cases. With growing unrest and violence in the world, more families are in need of our support. Please prayerfully consider sponsoring a refugee family in 2012.



**Watch for details for PRAIRIE PRISM** – a community celebration event to honor newcomers to Saskatoon will be held September 30, 2012 at Holy Family Cathedral Hall in Saskatoon.

## Safe At Last—Marian Hooge Jones



Ta Pwe and Hsa Wah, together with their 5 children arrived in Saskatoon on July 4, 2011. They were greeted at the airport by several of their family members already living in Saskatchewan, and by some of their sponsors of the Rosthern Refugee Committee (RRC.)

Later that week, a welcome reception was held for the family at St. Odilions Catholic church, with approximately 60 persons in attendance. Pictured with the family are more RRC members, the Rev. M. Diegel, chair of the RMA on the far right, together with some friends and family.

The Interchurch refugee committee in Rosthern was established in the fall of 2007, under the umbrella of the Rosthern Ministerial Association (RMA) who have been working to bring four families to Rosthern. Two large Karen

families originally from Burma were sponsored jointly with the Canadian Government, and arrived in spring of 2008. The next two Karen families have been sponsored with the churches and community expected to contribute at least 12 months of full support for both families. Ta Pwe and family, pictured here have already settled in Rosthern and have begun English tutoring, while the fourth family is expected to arrive in mid September.

Rosthern and area, is not new to sponsoring refugees, and welcoming immigrants. What is new, is that instead of only the Mennonite and Catholic churches working together on refugee sponsorships in Rosthern, now the Alliance, SDA, Anglican, Lutheran and Evangelical have all joined in with this

work as well. Community people have also volunteered and have donated. It is humbling to experience so much positive energy to assist these families to settle in to their new life.

I feel that my work in Rosthern is a God given task, and I enjoy it immensely. To sign the official sponsorship documents, on behalf of the RRC, together with MCC, was at first quite scary...but this is a necessary step, and the RMA gave me great support and have genuine interest in this work. Miracles continue to surprise us, and to show us that God is favorable to our limited efforts, and always is ready to bless our feeble attempts at loving our neighbors. May God be praised.



Ta Pwe and Hsa Wah Family

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Eh Paw, from Myanmar, arrived in 2007 with her father and 3 siblings sponsored by the Cornerstone Church.

## Life's Journey - Eh Paw

Alone, I made the toughest decisions everyday  
When the shooting started  
When strange men entered the town  
And started burning  
Houses and proclaimed any "Operation as no Living Thing"  
When in the middle of the night  
I heard the shooting start  
I decided it was time to flee and  
Started the long hazardous journey to an unknown country  
In the thick forest I was tired, weak and hungry  
I arrived at a refugee camp in a border town  
I feel safe here and I was registered by the  
Protection Officer  
And given food by the United Nations  
In the camp, I wonder how daily life goes  
In some cases the guards ensure that no one enters  
Or leaves without authorization  
Living in the refugee camp for many years  
It was like living in the museum  
The life in the camp is miserable and monotonous  
Like an unable bird living in the long, boring and  
timid cage  
Finally, Canada is pleased to open the door to us.  
From the old boring camp to the new challenging world  
My family's long journey to Canada  
Adjusting to life in Canada is challenging  
being in the new land  
I have got full opportunities as a citizen  
But I don't have many close friends and touching neighbours  
in a different land  
I'm willing to avoid the conflict again  
To find peace, freedom and self-determination  
and another vision  
To have equal rights and more education

## SOCCER CAMP - Kaytee Edwards

This past summer MCCS partnered with Room For Improvement Youth Development Inc. in bringing a four day long youth boys soccer camp to the neighborhood of Meadowgreen in Saskatoon. The neighborhood has a high population of refugees and immigrants and this camp was focused on bringing all of the nations together to play on a team as a way to bridge cultural and linguistic barriers. On average 22 players came out and each boy received full equipment and all

meals all for free! This camp is an example of team work at its finest in that all levels of organization were involved in order to make it a success. Now the organizers will work with the boys throughout the year as a way to continue the lessons learned throughout the week. They also want to develop sponsorship and mentorship programs for the youth in connection with U of S soccer players.

### PROPOSED CAMPS FOR August 23-26, 2012

Meadowgreen Boys Soccer Camp

and

Meadowgreen Girls Sports Camp

Watch for more details.



## Times Are A'Changin'

The world of Private Sponsorship is changing. **Please note the following:**

- The Minister of Immigration, Jason Kenney has committed to **landing more privately sponsored refugees** in 2012. In 2010, 4,833 were landed. For 2012 he has committed to landing 5,500.
- He is also committed to **reducing the backlog** and waiting times in visa posts around the world.
- MCC, along with other Sponsor Agreement Holders (SAHs) have **signed a new Agreement**. The Agreement is very similar to the old one with the only changes being that of a fixed term contract and mention of a provision that caps may be imposed by the Minister.
- For 2012, **a number of Visa Posts have had caps** placed on them which means that there is a limit to the number of applications to those visas posts that can be submitted by private sponsors.
- Please take note that in

**2012, MCC Saskatchewan will be unable to accommodate family linked or sponsor referred sponsorships .**

This means that families who come to you, our constituent groups, or directly to MCC requesting sponsorships for their family members or friends will not be able to be submitted in 2012 and possibly beyond.

The Minister of Immigration has capped all of these types of private sponsorships at 1,350 people for all of the 89 SAHs across the country. SAHs have received their allocation numbers for 2012 and MCC has received spaces for only 29 people. The MCC Refugee Network is currently in discussion about how we will use the spaces available to us.

- The allocations do not however, prevent us from responding to the world's sponsorship needs. In 2012 we will be **looking for sponsors for Visa Office Referred cases (VOR) and Joint Assisted (JAS) cases**. The good news in this is that the refugees will arrive sooner. MCC

can work with constituent groups to identify the types and size of family that groups are prepared to sponsor with the assistance of the Matching Centre in Ottawa.

- The **Source Country category has been repealed** as of the end of November 5, 2011. For many years, SAHs were able to sponsor internally displaced persons from their countries of origin if the country had been designated by Canada as a Source Country. One example of this was Colombia. Many of our Saskatchewan churches have supported families from Colombia through this program.

Unfortunately, it will no longer be possible to sponsor refugees directly from their country of origin. MCC continues to be in discussion with our partners in Colombia regarding internally displaced persons there.

Please stay in touch with us about these changes and others currently under discussion, and join us in praying for the safety, and well being of all of the refugees who are affected by these changes.





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**Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ,**

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## We're on the Web

[www.sk.mcc.org/refugeeassistance](http://www.sk.mcc.org/refugeeassistance)

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*MCC's Refugee Program is focused on assisting in the protection of refugees. Constituent groups under MCC's Sponsor Agreement with the Government of Canada commit to providing financial and settlement support to refugees from many parts of the world. Constituent groups are responsible for meeting refugees at the airport, helping them find suitable accommodation, access to language learning opportunities, registering in appropriate services, and helping them find employment.*

*Sponsors provide them with enough financial support to live for the first year after arrival. Most of all sponsors become the family and social support network the refugees leave behind when they come to Canada.*

*If you are interested in learning more about sponsorship and our work with refugees, please call our office and ask to speak to the Refugee Coordinator.*

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## Websites of Interest

[www.rstp.ca](http://www.rstp.ca) – The Refugee Sponsorship Training website provides updates on a variety of topics related to sponsoring refugees.

[www.globalgatheringplace.com](http://www.globalgatheringplace.com) – The Global Gathering Place website provides you with an outline of their services to newcomers, and volunteer opportunities in Saskatoon.

[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) – The United Nations High Commission for refugees gives a complete synopsis of the world's refugee movements.

## Ride for Refuge—Thank You!

Thank you to Captains, Erin Holm of Nu-West Construction Products, Rhonda Schindel—Team Spirit, and Kaytee Edwards—Pedal for Peace and their team members for supporting us in the Ride for Refuge which took place October 1, 2011. This year's Ride raised \$2,011 for the MCCS Refugee Fund.

It was exciting to see the energy and enthusiasm of the riders on a beautiful fall day as they rode for the charity of their choice. We are extremely grateful for the support of our three teams who took to their bikes and rode for refugees.

This year's ride raised \$2011 for the MCCS Refugee Fund.

We look forward to growing our support in next year's Ride for Refuge. Watch for more details.

