

# CONNECTIONS

Issue three, October 2023

## In this Issue

Free beds and discounted household items for newcomers  
How you can help PRSN on social media  
Latest sponsorship research at U of Ottawa  
SIN: what you need to know  
Are you ready for Month 13?  
Learning opportunities: dealing with trauma informed care

## What's New

by Marika Elek



Welcome to our third issue of Connections. The summer has been a time for rest and re-generation but work has continued on a number of fronts. We held our second annual general meeting in September with the year's achievements outlined in our **annual report**, which can be accessed at <https://refugeesponsornet.ca/annual-reports/>, or you may already have received a link to it through one of our MailChimp messages. Of particular note is the wonderful special gift we received from an international law firm Reed Smith, toward our ongoing work. Take a moment to read the report; your committees have been hard at work on your behalf. There is one learning offering before calendar year-end that is outlined in this issue. The Board is beginning some new work on a Theory of Change document that should position us well to begin raising operational and project funding from government, corporations and foundations in addition to seeking individual gifts. If you have any questions or comments, send me an email at [info@refugeesponsornet.ca](mailto:info@refugeesponsornet.ca). As chair of the board, I am happy to answer them.

## Sleep Country Donated Bed Program

by Sieg Will



Sleep Country has generously agreed to provide the Private Refugee Support Network (Ontario) with the opportunity to source mattresses and foundations through the *Sleep Country Bed Donation Program* throughout Ontario.

The program provides pre-owned mattresses and foundations to be donated to local charities through Sleep Country's Bed Donation Program. All mattresses are thoroughly inspected through the Clean Sleep program and if the item is in good condition and passes inspection, it will be donated to charity. If for any reason it does not pass inspection, these items will be recycled.

To have your request be eligible for a donated mattress and/or foundation be reviewed. Please send your request to the Sleep Country CARES Inbox: [carescc@sleepcountry.ca](mailto:carescc@sleepcountry.ca). The Sleep Country CARES team will review the request and ensure it goes to the proper distribution centre in Ontario.

Please provide the following information in your email to the CARES team:

- 1) Referred by the Private Refugee Support Network
- 2) Location where the refugee family and or individual will reside.
- 3) The number of sleep sets and size of the mattress(es) and or foundation(s) required.

As a sponsor, you or someone from your group will need to coordinate the pick-up of the pre-owned mattress and/or foundation from the Sleep Country distribution centre or affiliated partner.

We hope you are as excited about this partnership as we are, and we are so fortunate to be able to provide newcomers to Canada with a "Good Night's Sleep".

## **Wholesale Refugee & Transitional Housing Supplies in Canada**

by Barbara Sheffield



Sponsors are always looking for household items for setting up new homes for newcomers when they do not receive them as donations. You may want to learn more about Canada's favourite discount wholesaler, the Bargains Group, that offers a huge variety of refugee and newcomer supplies including blankets, household items, medical first aid kits, and clothes at up to 80% off.

According to Jody Steinhauer, CBO, she loves helping the refugee/newcomer sector and says she has so many ways to share with anyone who is helping in the sector. Pioneering her belief that "giving back" makes good business sense, Jody is a tireless not-for-profit advocate and founder of a national charity, Engage and Change.

If you do not see what you are looking for on the website -- <https://www.bargainsgroup.com/> -- get in touch at 1 877 868-5655 or email [info@bargainsgroup.com](mailto:info@bargainsgroup.com). The Bargains Group will find the stock that will fulfill your need. While headquartered in Toronto, it will ship orders anywhere in Canada, or if you are in the GTA, you can choose to pick up your order.

## Welcome to our new Secretary-Treasurer, Anna Nguyen

by David Curtis



We have said our goodbyes to Aurelie Olives, our previous secretary-treasurer, who has decided she must leave us a result of increasing work pressures and family life. But how fortunate we are to welcome Anna Nguyen, as our new treasurer! Anna came to Canada as a young child from VietNam. She holds an MBA from Laurentian University and is a chartered professional accountant (CPA and CGA). Her work life serving as a finance director, chief financial officer and corporate controller have prepared her for this volunteer responsibility. She will guide us in budgeting, financial management, strategic planning and financial reporting. We are delighted to welcome her to the team.

## Help us get the word out!

by Jennifer Kett



We need your help to tell our story!

Over the last two years, we've grown steadily, enabling us to make a significant impact; and you can help us continue to grow, increase our support and build awareness. Through the power of social media, we can reach more people who may be interested in joining our cause or contributing their resources to assist.

Here are a few simple ways you can make a real difference:

**Follow us on social media:** Please follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn where we showcase our organization's mission, success stories, upcoming events, and relevant news.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/refugeesponsornet/>

<https://www.facebook.com/refugeesponsornet>

**Personal Statements:** Post about our organization's mission and impact and why you're a part of it.

**Engage with Our Content:** Social media works when we like, comment, and share posts from the PRSN official social media accounts. Your engagement will increase the visibility of our content, reaching a broader audience.

**Reshare Network Updates:** When the Network shares news, articles, or updates, reshare them on your own social media profiles to share this valuable information and generate meaningful conversations.

## The Spring Research Project

by Bill Croson



Over the last two years, the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub conducted a qualitative research project on the role of sponsors in the settlement of privately sponsored refugee newcomers. The research team interviewed a large and diverse pool of individual sponsors, sponsorship agreement holders, settlement workers, former and current government officials, and other stakeholders. The project findings will be outlined in two academic articles that may be of interest to private sponsors.

The first explores the impact of “named sponsorships” (where a sponsor group applies to sponsor a specific person or family) and how that process has led to the gradual diversification of the pool of sponsors. The study sought to unravel the complexity pointing out that different types of sponsoring groups lead to different settlement trajectories of the sponsored newcomers.

The second article focuses on a very important and largely unexplored topic relating to the bureaucratization of the private sponsorship refugee program. The evidence that the authors present is based not only on the data collected through interviews, but also on archival research that explored the evolution of application forms and program requirements since the end of the 1970s. The article summarizes the gradual changes in the requirements that sponsors must meet, the changes in the forms that they must fill in and submit, and the recent post-arrival assurance activities undertaken by the government. In addition, it discusses how all these changes affect the motivation of different sponsors to participate in the private sponsorship program.

Both articles are expected to be published in academic journals in the coming autumn/winter. For any questions related to the SPRING research project, contact Tihomir Sabchev at [tihomir.sabchev@refugeehub.ca](mailto:tihomir.sabchev@refugeehub.ca)

## Since You Asked

by Cora Dusk



How do newcomers get a Social Insurance Number?

- The Social Insurance Number (SIN) is a 9-digit number that is required to work in Canada and access government programs and benefits.
- There are benefits for all family members to get a SIN.
- These are some common uses of a SIN:
  - For employment;
  - For filing income tax;
  - For opening a financial account at a bank or credit union;
  - To obtain government benefits;
  - To obtain Child Tax Benefits (CCB)
  - To get Canada Student Loans.

Use this link to learn more about the required documents and begin the application process:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/apply.html>

There is no fee to apply for a SIN. You can apply online, by mail or in person at a Service Canada Centre. Some walk-in locations are seeing high demand for service, so make sure you book an appointment at <https://eservices.canada.ca/en/service/> if you wish to apply in person.

Once you receive your SIN, make sure you protect it. Everyone's SIN is private, and it is illegal for anyone else to use it. It is essential to keep it secure and not provide it unnecessarily. In the wrong hands, your SIN could lead to the loss of government benefits, tax refunds, or bank credits. Improper use can lead to identity theft. Here is a web page which helps you to determine when and when not to provide your SIN:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/protection.html>

## Road to Best Practice: Doing a Needs Assessment before Month 13

by Kathleen Magladry



Ensuring that those we sponsor experience a smooth transition at the end of a 12-month sponsorship is key to a successful sponsorship. At our September 23 workshop, Michelle Ndizeye, a trainer with the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), put us through the paces of how to do a needs assessment and when to begin and shared with us the RSTP Month 13 checklist: <https://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Month-13-Resource-Kit-v.1.4.pdf>

At Month 9, the sponsor group should:

- Look at the sponsorship experience so far from both sides
- Determine unmet needs
- Discuss the post-sponsorship relationship
- Form an action plan for the remaining months

At Month 12, use the checklist to ensure that newcomers have the information and skills needed for post-sponsorship. Some newcomers may need help through social assistance (OW or ODSP).

We also heard from the newcomer perspective. One participant reported, "It was good to hear the newcomer voice from Ashraf. Sometimes we get so focussed on all the elements of a needs assessment, we forget that the newcomer assessment of the experience is critical to determining a successful sponsorship."

### Upcoming Training Opportunity

By Anneli Andre Barrett



Many of you may have had the opportunity to join one of our **Lunch & Learn** sessions or Saturday morning **workshops**. These learning opportunities address issues and problems sponsor groups may face and include knowledgeable experts and a moderator to help sponsors get to the heart of the challenge and offer practical solutions in an online, one-hour discussion.

We have one more workshop planned for this fall that we hope you can join:

**Trauma-Informed Care: November 4, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon**

- It dives into the subject for adults and children in refugee families.
- Discover how to communicate more effectively with families by understanding the cultural implications and gain insights into addressing traumatic experiences stemming from war, violence, genocide, and persecution during their journeys.
- Explore coping, healing, and affirming conversations with our expert presenters:
  - Jess Howsam, Researcher
  - Huda Bukhari, Community Engagement Manager at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT)
  - Dr. Yusra Ahmad, Psychiatrist at the University of Toronto

Watch for our registration flyers for these valuable workshops in 2024!

## **PRSN Committees**

By Barbara Sheffield



Organizational committees are where the work happens; they determine how best to advance the work to reach goals and objectives. Here are two more PRSN committees that you should know about and how they are working for you.

### **Services Committee**

**Chair, Anna Bolotnov, [annabolotnov@gmail.com](mailto:annabolotnov@gmail.com)**

This committee responds to sponsor need to develop new programs and services to assist sponsors in more effective settlement. In collaboration with other PRSN committees, the Services committee has developed an online Lunch & Learn offering and is currently ready to conduct a pilot project around its creation of a mentorship program. Sponsors have also asked this committee to develop a sponsor informed resource directory, and consider launching a best practice inventory. If these initiatives appeal to you, and you are taking a break from active settlement, there is a place on this committee for you. Contact Anna for more information.

### **Knowledge Exchange**

**Chair, Bill Croson – [wcroson@healthstats.ca](mailto:wcroson@healthstats.ca)**

This committee focusses on knowledge management and exchange that will help us with what we need to know to develop any potential advocacy strategy around hurdles that private

sponsor groups might face. Currently, the committee is collaborating on one university conducted research project and is monitoring three other projects that are in progress. It has liaised with two universities on creating a secure platform for collecting and storing research related to private sponsorship settlement that can be applied by the Network in its training and service development. If this is your passion, get in touch with Bill to see how you might participate on this committee.

## **Next issue: January-March, 2024**

Shape the content of the next issue, let us know what you want to share, and what you would like to see included in **Connections**. Send us your “since you asked” questions around post-arrival issues. We would love to hear from you. Deadline for submitting ideas for our next issue is **December 1**. You can send to [b.sheffield@rogers.com](mailto:b.sheffield@rogers.com) for this deadline.

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