

For Immediate Release

KW Counselling Services hires an Arabic-speaking therapist with a grant from the Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers.

Since November 2015, more than 26,600 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada. Around 1,200 have settled in Waterloo Region. “As these families adjust to life in Canada, they will face challenges on multiple fronts of their life. We want to support these families in their transition and adjustment and in managing whatever trauma they may have experienced in Syria or in their tumultuous journey here,” said Leslie Josling, Executive Director of KW Counselling Services. “When we spoke with other family counselling agencies in the region it became clear there was a gap in the service we could provide. None of us had an Arabic-speaking therapist on staff.” These local agencies have a long history of working together, to ensure that individual, couple and family therapy is coordinated and accessible throughout Waterloo Region. This includes examining and advocating for the capacity to serve diverse communities, including refugees.

KW Counselling Services has a long history of working with newcomers in the community. “Back in the 1950s,” says Josling, “KW Counselling Services (then the Kitchener-Waterloo Family Services Bureau) worked with Hungarian and Czechoslovakian refugees arriving in the community. Today, we commit to having a minimum of 12 languages spoken on staff at any given time so we can offer counselling in a client’s mother tongue wherever possible. Once we realized that neither KW Counselling Services or our sister agencies had an Arabic-speaking therapist, we applied for a grant from the Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers,” said Josling.

KW Counselling Services has been granted \$60,000 to hire an Arabic-speaking therapist for one year. Rasha Mardini is a graduate level therapist who will begin seeing clients on behalf of all seven agencies beginning July 4, 2016. The agencies include: Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge & North Dumfries, Carizon Family and Community Services (Kitchener), Interfaith Community Counselling Centre (New Hamburg), Woolwich Counselling Centre (Elmira), Shalom Counselling Services (Waterloo), Lutherwood Family Counselling Services (Cambridge) and KW Counselling Services (Kitchener).

Rasha will help us in building a positive relationship with our new neighbours as we all strive to create a caring, welcoming community. She will connect with other organizations in the region that are also attempting to serve this population.

These funds are part of the \$125,000 in grants that have been approved for local agencies helping with Syrian refugee resettlement. The funds are made up of community donations, matched through The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation (The KWCF) and its fundholders. Other grantees include Reception House, ShamRose for Syrian Culture and Sanctuary Refugee Health Clinic.

“We are grateful to the Immigration Partnership Council and for the generosity of the Waterloo Region community for enabling us to provide help to our newcomers and for helping us to realize our vision of a community where no one is left behind,” said Josling.

Media Contact: Leslie Josling leslie@kwcounselling.com 519.884.0000 x216