



# Journey Home Community Annual Report for 2023





## Thank You & More...

Thank you to our donors, sponsors and volunteers.

Your partnership allows us to realize our vision of a society where all refugees experience hope and belonging as they engage in meaningful participation in their community and flourish in all aspects of life.

**Canada**  This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.



Club of Vancouver, BC  
Vancouver Rotary Club Foundation

### Legacy Gifts

The sad reality is that refugee claimant families will continue to arrive on our shores having fled from danger and persecution. The need to support these vulnerable families is not going away. Journey Home plans to be there for arriving refugees, providing housing, support and community for years to come.

You can create a legacy of hope for arriving refugee claimants with a legacy gift through your will, or through a gift of publicly-traded securities, such as stocks, bonds or mutual funds. Such gifts are also an effective way to give, as they are not subject to costly capital gains taxes, and donors can receive a tax credit for their generous gifts.

Contact our office for more information.

### Limitations on the spending of Journey Home Community funds

Spending of funds is confined to Board approved programs, projects, and services. Each restricted designated contribution will be used as designated until the purpose has been met, or it cannot be completed for any reason determined by the Board. In this instance, any remaining restricted contributions will be used where needed most.

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We acknowledge that Journey Home Community works on and welcomes arriving refugee claimants onto the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the ɔ́íłəy̓ (Katzie), Kwantlen, kʷikʷəłəm (Kwkwetlem), Matsqui, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Semiahmoo, Sumas, Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Tsawwassen, sə́lilwətaʔt (Tseil-Waututh), and QayQayt First Nation.

Cover page artwork is from the Syrian Refugee Art Initiative, facilitated by Jordan Bergner. He travelled to refugee camps in Jordan to facilitate mural arts projects with Syrian youth and their families

To learn more about the project or see more murals, visit: <https://joelartista.com/syrian-refugees-the-zaatari-project-jordan/>



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

# Stability & Hope

—Brad Kinnie



In 2023, across our various transitional housing programs for refugee claimants, we welcomed 360 newly arrived individuals. Each one, a person with dignity, strength, and resilience.

An individual asked us, “what is the business you are in?” Thinking about the range of activities we have as an organization, a few keys stand out. We are in the business of walking alongside families and individuals...

...who are homeless as they move into a safe home.

...who arrive in Canada with no connections as they build friendships and networks.

...who have experienced displacement but are now rebuilding a sense of belonging.

...who have been harmed by trauma while they begin to experience healing.

It's the business of stability and hope. And it is a business that requires two great qualities.

The first quality is love. Journey Home is inspired by God's love. Rooted in Christian faith, we take our example from Jesus and his teachings to show compassion and grace, to be a healing community, and to love our neighbours.

The second quality is community. Journey Home is made up of staff, volunteers, donors, and refugee families that arrive in BC. Everyone contributes to a wonderful, complex, and exciting community.

I want to acknowledge the staff team who share love and build community. 2023 was year two of a significant expansion. The final couple of hirings to complete our staff team of 16 talented, passionate, and skilled individuals happened early in the year. A whole year working as a group allowed us to gel. We worked hard and overcame significant obstacles. We have great appreciation for one another and genuinely like to work together. The vibe is positive!

And as a result, our potential as a team and as an organization has emerged. This shows in the stories of strength we see all around us.

I think of Marcela who overcame some massive barriers and who now is living in her own home, connects with a local church, and accesses a support network that is helping her establish independence.

I think of Hidekel and Viviana, two inspiring women who arrived in previous years, but who are growing their small businesses to help support their families.

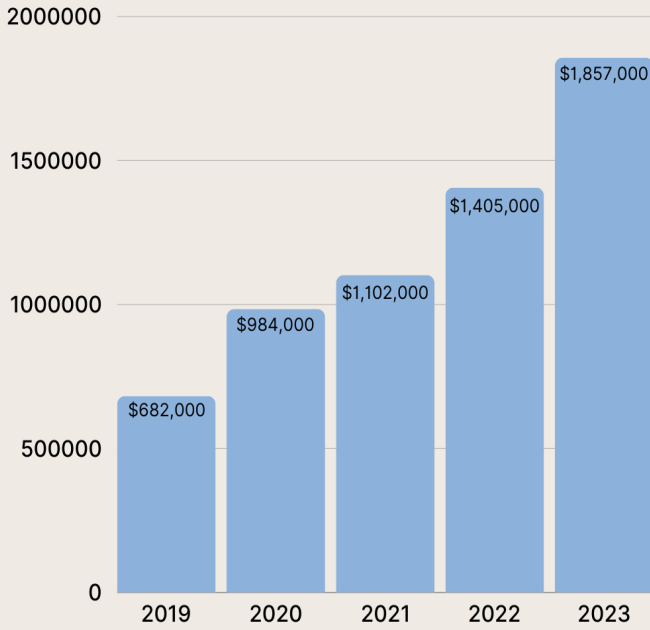
I think of Lucy and Amari, program graduates who shared their stories at Journey Home events. They demonstrated strength and resilience and provided inspiration and encouragement for our community.

As we move into 2024, we are actively planning to sustain the growth of Journey Home, support our staff, and demonstrate values of love and community. We couldn't do this without a strong base of partners, and we couldn't be more grateful.

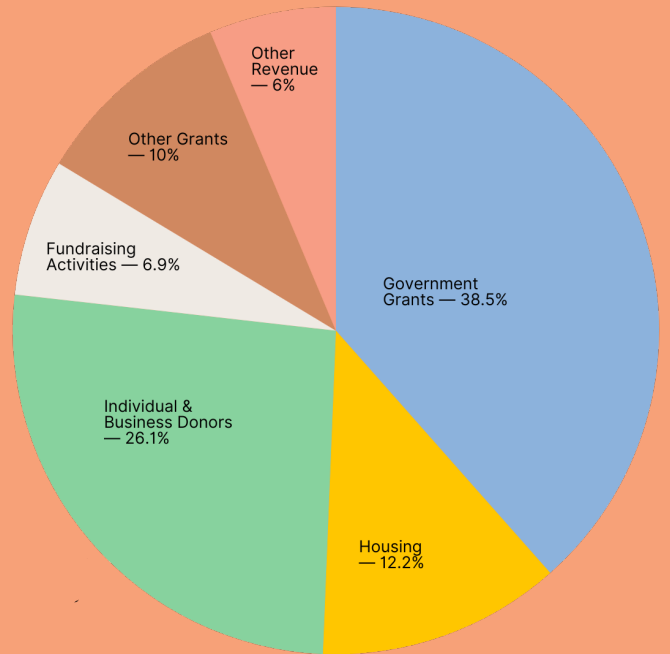
Thank you to donors, volunteers, corporate supporters, foundations, churches, and so many other groups that contribute to this movement. We are creating caring communities. And we are thankful that you have joined us.

# 2023 Financial Reporting

## Annual Revenue: Last Five Years

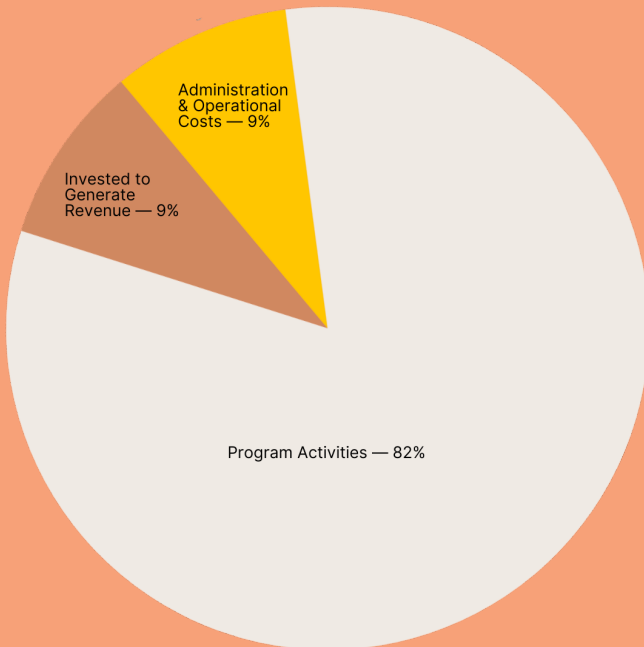


## 2023 Revenue Sources



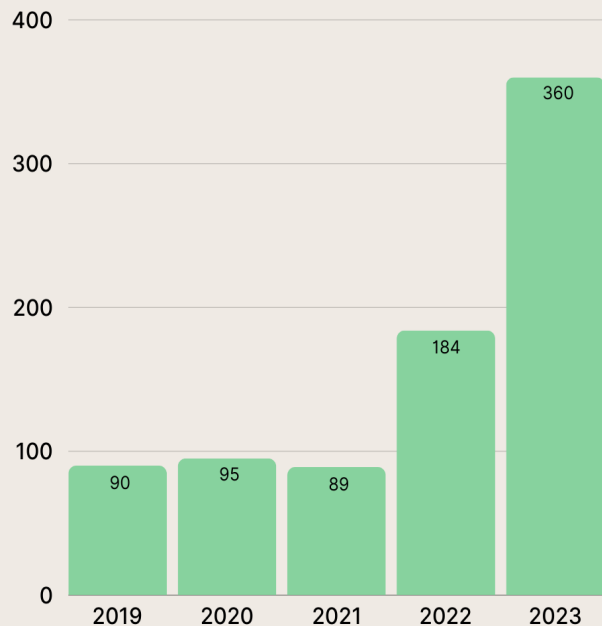
\*Revenue sources have been grouped together and rounded up for presentation purposes. For an accurate accounting of each revenue source line please refer to the Consolidated Financial Statements for 2023 available online.

## 2023 Expenses



\*For an accurate accounting of each expense line, please refer to the Consolidated Financial Statements for 2023 available online.

## Refugee Claimants Housed & Supported : Five Year Total — 818



## BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Threads of Hope: Navigating Trauma, Community, and Renewal

—John Dyck



When Gabriela was forced to leave her native country in South America with her three teenage children, they fled by taking the long arduous journey that took them through the jungles of the Darién gap. They somehow survived but will never forget the horrors they saw along the way and the further extortions they endured on their long trek north.

Let us fast forward to their encounter a few months ago with Journey Home Community (JHC). They had successfully crossed the border from the U.S., but had exhausted all their financial resources, had no place to go, and desperately needed a safe place to stay and some hope of help in a place where they did not speak the language or know anyone.

This is what JHC does best: when you can sleep at night without fear of violence, and you know someone is adequately caring for your needs, you can start hoping for a future again. That is what has characterized our year at JHC as we have provided a home and new hope for 360 people who came to Metro Vancouver seeking protection.

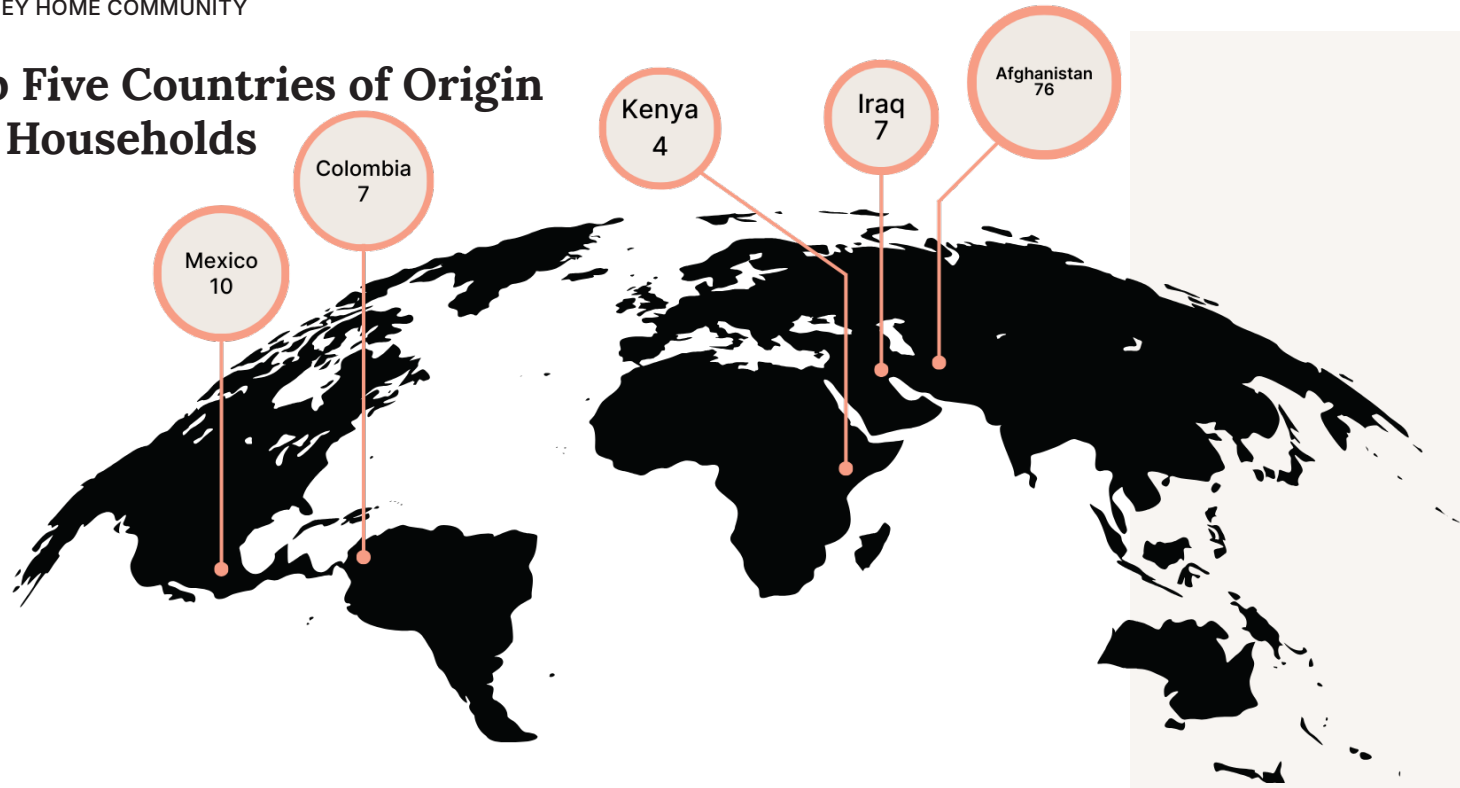
In 2023, JHC staff had to cope with the same housing challenges that so many other people are enduring in our city. Our caseworkers had to respond to family conflicts. They had to find medical assistance for various community members, including several births. They located community resources to provide for the basic needs of newcomer families. Most of all, they provided hope and support, both physically and emotionally.

We are aware of the role which trauma plays in the lives of the refugee claimant families we walk alongside and how this trauma can, at times, spill over into the lives of our caseworkers. We have also realized that as JHC grows and accommodates so many more families, we need to have a strategic plan which gives us direction through the next 3–5 years. We are spending considerable time and effort in 2024 to create a comprehensive plan.

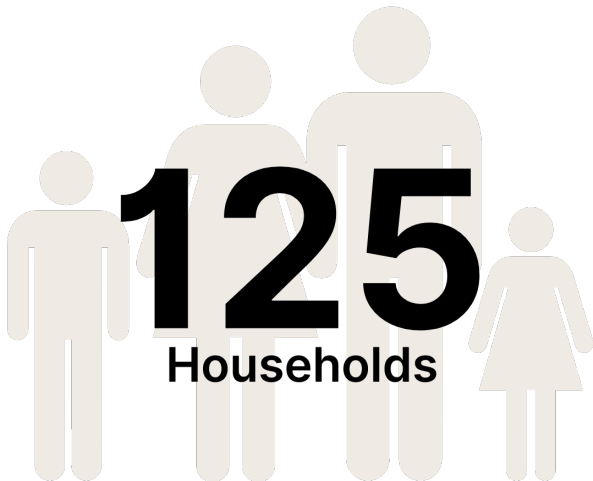
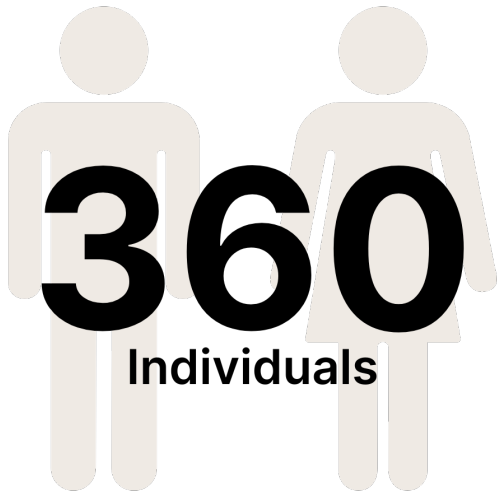
Above all, we do not want to compromise our value of caring deeply for these families and individuals as we show the love of Jesus. As we move into another year, we will continue to walk together with our community towards the hope refugee claimant families desperately need. You are an essential and integral part of our caring community. Thank you!



## Top Five Countries of Origin for Households



## 2023 Total Program Participants



*After 18 years, the partnership between Willingdon Church and Journey Home Community has only grown stronger, the spark burning brighter thanks to the launch of Willingdon House, a new Welcome Home transitional home. Thank you Willingdon Church for making this house a refuge for those in need.*

In the summer of 2023, Willingdon Church in Burnaby offered Journey Home Community a community house for refugee claimants. Journey Home quickly worked to prepare the house for its first residents, and within a few weeks, the house was ready. Families at risk of homelessness when arriving in Vancouver came to stay, sharing meals, playing games, and supporting each other as they navigated the complex process of claiming refugee status in Canada.

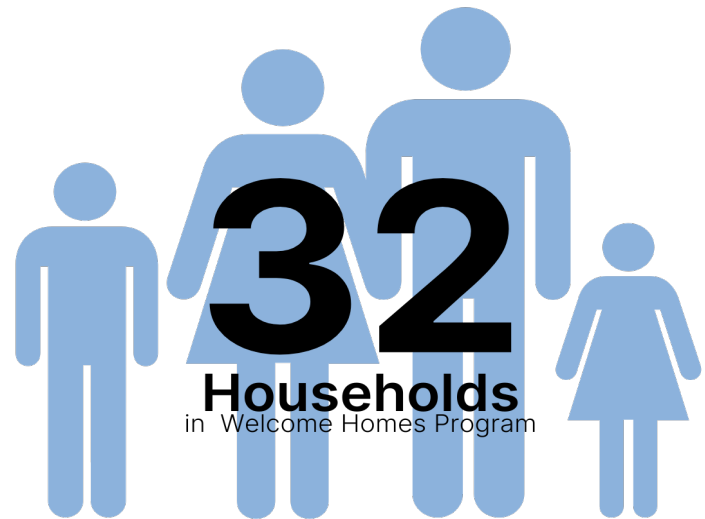
The community house became a bustling hub of activity, with participation from Willingdon Church's community, offering their support in various ways, including the kids participating in the summer camp at the church. By the end of the quarter, the community house had welcomed 24 people in five families. Each family had their own unique story of perseverance and resilience that helped them to continue moving forward to the next stage of housing in different cities around the Lower Mainland.

Journey Home and Willingdon Church are proud of what we have accomplished together. We know that there is still much work to be done to support refugee claimants in our community, but we are heartened by the knowledge that we are making a difference, one family at a time.

## WELCOME HOMES

# Open Arms, Warm Hearts and Friendships Built

—Roberto Ortega



2023 was a bright year: 26 families arrived in Vancouver, each carrying their own stories and struggles; but also talents, resilience, and experience. They had left their homes in seven different countries, all seeking safety and a new beginning. However, they arrived in a foreign land with no support or resources, unsure of where to turn.

That's when our Welcome Homes team stepped in. With open arms and warm hearts, we welcomed them into our community and provided them with a transitional house to call their own for a few months. The families were welcomed in transitional houses that were clean, safe, and equipped with modest furniture donated by the community. In 2023, these houses provided 116 people a safe space to start their new lives.

But that was just the beginning. Our team worked tirelessly to create an action plan for each family, tailored to their unique needs and circumstances. We helped them navigate the complex legal system, registered their kids in school, provided referrals for language lessons,

secured a source of income, attained food security, and provided training to secure their next stage of housing in our tough housing market.

Despite the challenges they had faced, the families were resilient and eager to start anew. They quickly formed bonds with one another, sharing their stories and cultures over meals and activities. Our team facilitated these connections, recognizing that a strong sense of community was crucial in their journey of integrating and adapting to a new culture and systems.

Three families living in one of our Welcome Homes community houses were at the end of their housing agreement. Despite this predicament, the families decided to find a new house to live in together and God's providence opened the doors for an exciting opportunity. In collaboration with the Muslim Food Bank, they found a landlord who offered them a new house. These three families moved in together and continue to live as a community, grateful for the opportunity to stay together. We celebrate successes like this!

**Welcome Homes are permanent Journey Home Community transitional homes. In a posture of friendship and community support, Welcome Homes offers refugee claimants short term housing (3-4 months) followed by support to move into more permanent homes (subsidized or market rentals). Staff provide wrap-around case management from intake until the results of the refugee determination hearing (9-12 months on average).**



# A Story of Redemption

—Robyn Epp

## MEANWHILE SPACES



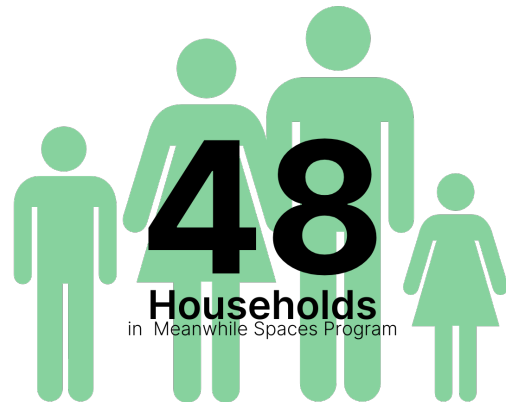
When I first met the Atiki/Safi family in May 2023, they had been unhoused for about a month. On the day we planned to do an intake with them, the father of the family was unfortunately in hospital after experiencing a severe health problem. We brought the family of 7 into our Meanwhile Spaces house and helped them set up the essentials. In the days that followed, the father was able to rejoin his family in their new home, and step by step we worked through their settlement journey.

Because they didn't have any source of income, we provided Walmart cards for the family to get what they needed. They received library cards and a recreation pass in Coquitlam. They received donated clothing from a nearby ministry and visited local food banks. But the most important thing for these parents was the wellbeing of their kids. However, since school wasn't in session when they finally received their ID documents, they had no outlet for their kids. After researching programs in the area, I found a free soccer club that three of the children could attend that summer. I noticed huge improvements in their confidence and English ability after that.

The family faced a big challenge when the bill for the hospital stay finally arrived in the fall. It was an insurmountable sum of money, but the family had no health coverage at that time. I went through the long process to contact health authorities and gather the documentation needed to request coverage for this family. Finally, we submitted the documentation and awaited the response, knowing that if it was denied, this family faced long-term debt or financial ruin.

In the meantime, the family was looking constantly for next-stage housing as they moved towards the end of our transitional housing. For a family this size, few landlords were willing to consider their applications and their budget was not adapted to the housing market in crisis. Thankfully, through some connections, they were able to find a basement suite in Surrey, to which they moved in October. Still unsure about their outstanding health bill, I connected them to local services in their new area. One month after their move, they received the decision – Positive! This meant the health insurance was extended to cover the emergency that took the father to the hospital, and their bill was completely covered!

This was not the end of the Atiki/ Safi family's challenges. I got to visit them at the end of the year and they informed me that the house owner was selling the house. They had to move again. To my surprise, they made a connection with 2 other families that were still in our transitional housing. With their combined determination and income, they were able to rent a whole house together in Burnaby and moved in January 2024. This is similar to the three families in our Welcome Homes update, with families finding ways to find affordable housing and continuing to live together in community. It is my absolute joy to know that this family has the skills and support to keep moving forward as they face the many challenges of living in a country that is still learning how to welcome them.



**Meanwhile Spaces are empty homes and housing units provided to Journey Home Community by housing developers while they are preparing for a demolition project. In a posture of friendship and community support, we offer these units to refugee claimants as transitional housing followed by support to move into more permanent homes (subsidized or market rentals).**



## COMMUNITIES OF WELCOME

We are inspired by the love that God poured out onto us. We are compelled to share this love by helping to build a society where all refugees encounter an opportunity to experience hope, belonging, and connection so they will flourish. We are working towards this vision by partnering with local churches and community groups to expand our ability to walk with more refugees.

This program, Communities of Welcome, is where Journey Home coaches and walks with a group of volunteers who welcome and support a refugee claimant family during their first year in Canada. In 2023, we were able to work with three specific Communities of Welcome. Every Community of Welcome has the flexibility to function in a way that works best for the group. Journey Home works alongside to give initial training and then provide ongoing coaching as the group works directly with the family.

One Community of Welcome connected to a church had two main volunteers who walked alongside a family of three. While they might have been small in number, they were priceless in the support they offered this family. The two volunteers were able to connect the family with all the essential services, however, what made the most impact was the time invested in compassionate listening as this family struggled to mentally adjust to their new reality in Canada. While the official program of support has ended, the friendship continues. The concept of flourishing for this family started with a patient, listening ear.

A church who had previously privately sponsored a Middle Eastern family, was surprised when an additional eight intergenerational family members arrived in Canada seeking asylum. The church said yes, let's help them, and connected with Journey Home through the Community of Welcome Program for support. This team of about seven volunteers who all have personal full time

jobs, eagerly jumped in and helped this family navigate some complicated documentation issues and family dynamics. It's amazing that it just took a little care, intentionality and availability from this team to help a struggling family experience a bit of hope as they walk towards a sense of belonging in Canada.

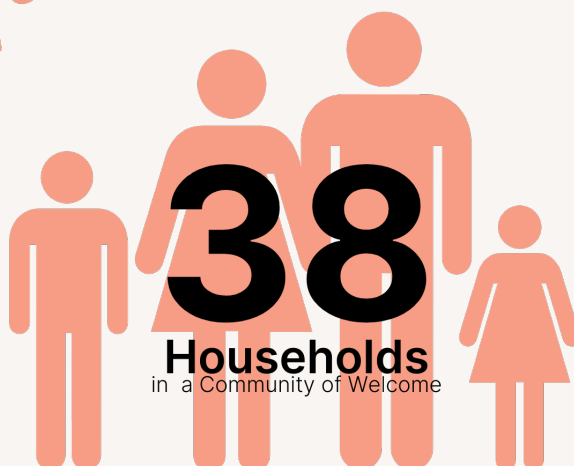
One of our longest standing Community of Welcome partners grew from walking alongside one family in 2015, to 28 different refugee families in 2023! Who could have ever envisioned 8 years later they would be running a refugee ministry? Last year they joined our Meanwhile Space partnership and launched a community house as a transitional housing space. This allowed their Community of Welcome to grow into a refugee ministry rather quickly. While this ministry is mostly run by a team of volunteers, their model is a lot of peer-to-peer work, refugees supporting refugees. The new volunteers on this team seemed surprised, as they thought that they would be the only ones giving to their newcomer community, but they soon realized how much they were receiving in hospitality, friendship and a sense of family.

Much like the body of Christ, we are all given different giftings and different abilities to serve, but we are all inspired by the same God, and through His love and Spirit we are able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Consider joining us in this vision of walking alongside refugees. Journey Home Community turns away roughly five families a week. Could you envision a society where this didn't have to happen?

If your church or group are interested, I would love to have a conversation with you (email: [Vanessa@journeyhomecommunity.ca](mailto:Vanessa@journeyhomecommunity.ca)). You too might be surprised by the mutually transformative relationship you encounter!

# Hospitality, Friendship and a Sense of Family

—Vanessa Arsenault



*Emulating Canada's Private Sponsorship Program, Journey Home Community trains and coaches community groups and faith communities to receive a refugee claimant family. This Community of Welcome group walks with them for a year providing housing, and sharing information and referrals for access to settlement supports. Most importantly the Community of Welcome group provides a welcoming experience and offers friendship that is mutually beneficial.*

VOLUNTEERS

# Caring Communities In A Gym

—Olivia Smith

Walking into a crowded gym, I saw faces smiling, connections being made, people enjoying food from all around the world and kids excited to get their faces painted. The crowdedness was not off-putting but rather comforting because all of these people from different backgrounds were connecting over Google Translate and many different dishes such as Pão de Gueijo or Dolmas or even Krispy Kreme donuts. Heaven came down to earth right there and it felt like a warm return home walking into that gym.

This amazing event was our Annual JHC Christmas Celebration in December 2023! Our theme was Nativities Around the World where we found various nativities from different countries and how they portrayed the birth of Jesus. We even had a donkey included in the petting zoo in the parking lot! We had over 300 community members that came to celebrate, which is well over how many people we had in previous years.

This would not have been possible without the dedication and heart of our passionate volunteers. These 34 volunteers came with a mix of backgrounds and experiences. We had students, working professionals, some retired, some refugees from within our program and some that have graduated from our program. Everyone brought their smiles and helping hands to assist with serving coffee, hot chocolate, and food. We needed firepit and petting zoo management, popcorn making, face painting, photo booth, and so much more. Some were even able to donate raffle items!

All of these contributions help to create a safe and fun atmosphere. For example, we had a participant that kept to herself when she was in our program but when she came to our Christmas Celebration, she felt that she could open up and create connections with others. Her settlement supervisor said that it was a beautiful surprise to see her feeling confident in this safe space and saw a great improvement in her demeanor throughout the night!

All of this to say, we are grateful for the support of volunteers to have the opportunity to help create moments like this; where we all can come as one and experience a heavenly community of hope and belonging.

Please let me know (email:Olivia@journeyhomecommunity.ca) if you are looking to join our volunteer team! JHC couldn't do half the work we do without the consistent support and care of our volunteers. Please find a list of both casual and role based opportunities on our website. We look forward to meeting you.



## Upcoming Events

A poster for the Annual General Meeting. The background is a photograph of a man and two children running on a grassy field. The man is in the foreground, wearing a white t-shirt and sunglasses. Two children are running behind him. In the background, there are trees and a building. The Journey Home Community logo is in the top left. The text 'Annual General Meeting' is in large white font. Below it, smaller text says 'We have lots to celebrate! Join us as we report on 2023 and look to 2024.' and 'Register &amp; Membership Fees payable online' with a QR code. At the bottom, it says 'Wednesday, April 17 at 7 PM Held at Willingdon Church'.

A poster for the Spring Gala. The background is a vibrant watercolor illustration of various flowers in shades of red, pink, orange, and blue. The text 'THE WELCOME TABLE' is at the top right. Below it, 'Spring Gala' is written in a large, green, serif font. Underneath, it says 'A FUNDRAISER FOR JOURNEY HOME COMMUNITY' and '14th May, 2024 six o'clock in the evening'. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner.

## HOUSING DEPARTMENT

In recent years, our organization has experienced significant growth in partnerships, particularly with developers and churches, to address the pressing need for housing solutions in our community. These partnerships have played a crucial role in our ability to serve refugee claimant families effectively. Additionally, the increasing demand for housing assistance has underscored the necessity for a dedicated Housing Department within our organization as part of our strategic vision. My role in leading this department, is to expand our housing services and strengthen our relationships with partners.

Churches have provided valuable resources such as volunteer manpower and essential clothing for families in need, recognizing the importance of necessities in promoting dignity and well-being. Furthermore, we have established partnerships with churches, such as Willingdon Church and Olivet Church, who provide community houses for refugee claimants. These community houses serve as safe havens for families and individuals as they navigate the challenges of resettlement in a new country. These houses serve as more than just shelters; they are vibrant, supportive communities where residents can access resources, build connections, and receive settlement services.

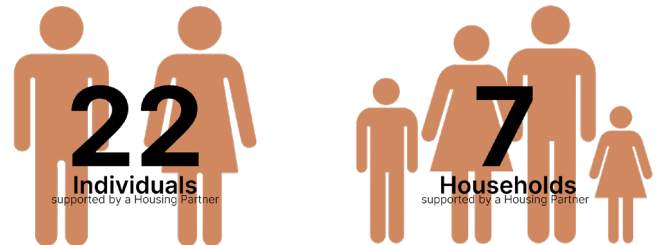
As we look ahead to 2024, our focus in the Housing Department will be on expanding our services and strengthening our partnerships. Unfortunately, we closed one community house in 2023. However, we are actively working to replace it. We have developed a strategic plan to maintain 30 units through our Meanwhile Spaces program. This initiative made possible through partnerships with developers, allows us to repurpose vacant properties into temporary housing units for individuals and families in need. The success of our Housing Department

# A Plan for More Homes

—Saeid Karimi

is deeply rooted in the strong working relationships we have cultivated with our partner organizations, including churches, other settlement agencies, non-profit organizations, and developers. These relationships have been built on mutual trust, collaboration, and a shared commitment to serving the refugee families of our community.

The establishment of a Housing Department marks an important milestone in our organization's efforts to address housing insecurity in our community. By strengthening our partnerships and expanding our services we are committed to creating a community where everyone has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. With the passion and dedication of our team, we are confident that we will continue to make a positive impact in the lives of those we serve.



\*These stats reflect the number of refugee claimant individuals and households that were housed in a Meanwhile Space but were supported by partner organizations and other settlement agencies.



## 3 Ways to Get Involved

### Volunteer

For most positions, we look for volunteers who can commit for a period of time. We begin by having a conversation so we can get to know you or your group and together, determine your best placement within the Journey Home Community.

Go to [journeyhomecommunity.ca/volunteer](https://journeyhomecommunity.ca/volunteer) to learn more ways you can get involved.

### Donate

It's not enough to provide housing and support. When refugees know people care and are there for them, this leads to HOPE. This is at the very core of Journey Home Community.

Donate online—no gift is too small. The easiest way to donate is to give online at [journeyhomecommunity.ca/give-today](https://journeyhomecommunity.ca/give-today)

### Pray

Join us as a prayer partner for Journey Home Community, the team and volunteers, the refugees we welcome to Metro Vancouver, and for the general needs of refugees worldwide.

Subscribe to our monthly Praise & Prayer Report—To join our list, email [prayer@journeyhomecommunity.ca](mailto:prayer@journeyhomecommunity.ca)





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