



## **CARTY HOUSE**

*A transitional home for  
refugee women*

P.O. Box 4758 STN E  
Ottawa ON K1S 5H9  
Tel: 613.236.8855  
Fax: 613.233.2485  
[www.cartyhouse.org](http://www.cartyhouse.org)

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# **ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

Sister Maureen Killoran of the Congregation of Notre Dame (CND) founded Carty House in 2001 to respond to the needs of female refugee claimants arriving alone in Ottawa. In 2009, it was recognized as a charitable organization with the following mission and objectives:

### Mission Statement

Carty House's mission is primarily to assist female refugee claimants and female convention refugees to pursue their claims and/or adjust to their new life on arrival in Canada through provision of accommodation and material, financial, and psychological supports.

### Objectives

1. To operate and maintain a temporary communal residence home for female refugees.
2. To provide residents with referrals to education, counselling, and other support services including language instruction, employment training, job search programs and informational programs on Canadian culture and life.

Carty House is unique as a communal home, as it receives no funding from any level of Government.

### **Overview of 2015 Refugee situation**

In many ways, 2015 was a positive year for refugees in Canada. As the UNHCR struggled to deal with the largest global refugee population since the Second World War, our government pledged to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees. This move represented a return to a time when Canada, as a nation, proudly opened its arms to people in need and came together to assist newcomers to rebuild their lives. Carty House has followed the arrival and settlement plans for the Syrian refugees in Ottawa and is partnering with OCRA (Ottawa Center Refugee Action) through the CURE (Centretown United Refugee Engagement) group to host a privately sponsored refugee woman. At the same time, cuts to the Interim Federal Health Plan (IFHP), that placed restrictions on health care access for certain categories of refugees and refugee claimants, were about to be reversed. In December, the government announced its intention to reinstate the IFHP to its original state and by April of this year, refugees and refugee claimants were again granted full access to health care.

While both of these moves were celebrated heartily at Carty House, we also recognize that many challenges remain and that many more people are in need of help. More than 60 million people around the world remain forcibly displaced, while here at home, those who seek protection continue to face significant challenges. The use of detention against refugee claimants and refused refugee claimants is on the rise in Canada, and many face the fear of deportation. For those who have been granted permission to stay, life in Canada presents many barriers to integration. These include high costs of living, lack of credential recognition, and ongoing suffering that comes from being separated from loved ones while at the same time trying to overcome the traumas of the past. Refugees and refugee claimants, who frequently arrive in Canada with significant financial debts associated with their travel, face the daunting tasks of learning a new language, finding employment, paying off loans, and finding the money to pay for added expenses, such as the approximately \$550 it currently costs to apply for permanent residency.

Carty House offers the opportunity for refugee women to get a head start on rebuilding their lives in Canada each year, and we are heartened by an environment that now seems more open and welcoming to refugees in our society. We should not however forget the millions who never make it here, nor the immense challenges faced by all of those who do.

### **Relations with the Congregation of Notre Dame (CND)**

The Carty House property is owned by the CND, Visitation Province, located in Bedford, Nova Scotia. In 2015, the notice period for termination of the lease was changed from 3 months to 1 year to provide greater stability to Carty House's tenancy. The CND also covers structural costs of the house and in this context renovated the second floor bathroom.

Fulfilling a 2014 objective, the Board Executive had a very productive business meeting with Sister Nina Glinski, Associate Province Leader in October 2015. Discussions centered on our vision of sustainability, our dreams for Carty House, for our residents and for their outcomes after leaving Carty House. The Executive also presented a financial summary and forecast of income and expense comparisons for 2015, 2016, 2017. Sr. Nina could make no guarantees or promises for a continuance of support as the term of the current CND Leadership and Administration team ends in 2017. We expect to continue having annual business meetings with the Leadership and Administration team. We are hopeful that the succeeding team will agree to renew or increase the present substantial level of funding. We look forward to meeting again with Sister Nina in 2016.

We sincerely thank the CND for the unexpected generous donation we received in December 2015.

## **Program and House Accomplishments**

### Residents

In 2015, Carty House welcomed seven new residents between the ages of 26 and 69. The new residents came from Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Nigeria and Uganda. Staff helped seven other residents to move into their own apartment units. Most residents were refugee claimants; two were government-sponsored refugees. Of the seven residents who attended refugee hearings, five received positive rulings. A total of 16 residents were housed during the year.

### Services Provided

Carty House staff provided orientation to life in Canada, helped with employment search, supported residents through the refugee claim process, assisted them with their applications for work permits and helped them navigate the health and social systems in Ottawa. Volunteers donated many hours tutoring in English and French. Eyeglasses and special medications were provided to residents as required. Coordinators and volunteers accompanied residents to Montreal for their hearings with the Refugee Board. For a second year, Sisters of the CND provided room and board during these visits to Montreal.

### Successes

There were three residents enrolled in professional training programs for personal support workers, childcare, and accounting. One obtained a childcare diploma and another obtained a personal support worker diploma. Six residents found part-time employment.

### Challenges

Residents continue to face barriers in accessing more secure and well-paid employment opportunities. They also lack supports enabling them to gain knowledge about the legal system and their rights in Canada in general, including their rights as future tenants of new accommodations. They must devote the majority of their time to studies and part-time work, when they are able to secure it. However, the women have demonstrated their resilience in successfully facing challenges as they arise.

### Volunteers

The dedicated volunteers at Carty House have assisted in running a number of workshops of interest to the residents, including budgeting, knitting, sewing, and yoga. A number of volunteers have done ESL and FSL tutoring, as well as providing companionship and friendship to the women. Some volunteers have helped residents as they moved out of Carty House into an independent living space.

Facilities: A new microwave was purchased for the house this year.

## **Personnel & Volunteers**

In 2015, the staff included Jacqueline Romero as Program Coordinator, Glennie-Ruth Allum Graves as House Coordinator and Kate Preston-Thomas as part-time bookkeeper. Katie Rieder joined the team for two months as a summer intern. Tara-Lee Harris took on Administrative responsibilities in November to prepare to assume the bookkeeper's role in January following Kate Preston-Thomas' departure in December.

We depend greatly on our many committed volunteers to accompany residents on cultural outings, do ESL and FSL tutoring and website updates, help with résumé writing, job search and coaching, spring-cleaning, gardening, conducting workshops on budgeting, and women's health and instructing yoga classes.

## **2015 Board Objectives**

1. Address topics from the Welcome Home Support Program Evaluation report written by Mary Peters in March 2014
2. Complete remaining Action items from the Visioning retreat held in April 2014
3. Expand our volunteer base through Social Justice groups at Schools, Colleges and Universities
4. Expand our database of donors and supporters
5. Secure more funding through grant applications
6. Become better-known in the Ottawa community for our mission and service to refugee women
7. Recruit qualified volunteers to help us increase our presence on relevant social media platforms
8. Fill vacancies on the Board due to relocation and end-of-term positions

The Board was very successful in meeting seven of its eight objectives. The Welcome Home Support Program Evaluation report will be re-visited in 2016.

## **The Board**

In August Tobi Cohen, Liz Majic, Josée Samson-Savage and Caitlin Williams joined current members Ann Henders, Caroline Pestieau, Jaime Lenet, Julie MacGarvey, Lorna Book, Lisa Fudge-Lunetta, Lisa Nesbitt, Osman Naqvi and Sister Bernadette O'Neill.

Lorna Book was elected Chair of the Board in January 2015, replacing Sr. Bernadette O'Neill, while Lisa Fudge-Lunetta joined the Executive committee as Secretary, replacing Lorna Book. Lisa Nesbitt was elected to the newly created position of Vice-Chair in March. Our Treasurer Donald MacDonald resigned at the end of May and was replaced by Julie MacGarvey.

## Board Committees

Carty House has several active committees responsible for the financial stability of Carty House and for promoting our presence in the community. These include Finance, Fundraising, Communications and one ad Hoc committee for recruitment/Board renewal. Board members chair all committees.

<p><u>Executive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Lorna Book (Chair)</li><li>○ Lisa Nesbitt (Vice-Chair)</li><li>○ Lisa Fudge-Lunetta (Secretary)</li><li>○ Julie MacGarvey (Treasurer)</li></ul> <p><u>Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Lorna Book (ex-officio)</li><li>○ Caroline Pestieau</li><li>○ Julie MacGarvey (joined June 2015)</li><li>○ Donald MacDonald (to May 2015)</li></ul> <p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Tobi Cohen (Chair)</li><li>○ Lorna Book</li><li>○ Lisa Nesbitt</li><li>○ Josée Samson-Savage</li><li>○ Stephanie Claros</li><li>○ Jessica Turner</li><li>○ Karishma Vaz</li><li>○ Jake Granados<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ (May- Dec. 2015)</li></ul></li><li>○ Shella Zaidi<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ (May- Oct. 2015)</li></ul></li></ul>	<p><u>Fundraising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Liz Majic (Chair)</li><li>○ Caitlin Williams</li><li>○ Tobi Cohen</li><li>○ Jackie Romero</li><li>○ Julie MacGarvey</li><li>○ Nancy MacDonald</li><li>○ Osman Naqvi</li><li>○ Betsy Schuurman</li><li>○ Kate Preston-Thomas (to April 2015)</li><li>○ Priya Chopra (to June 2015)</li><li>○ Kris Kelly (joined Nov.2015)</li><li>○ Laura Griffin (joined Nov.2015)</li></ul> <p><u>Grant-writing sub-committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Betsy Schuurman</li><li>○ Jaime Lenet</li><li>○ Joanna Heathcote</li><li>○ Liz Majic</li><li>○ Nancy MacDonald</li><li>○ Jackie Romero</li><li>○ Josie Howitt (to January 2015)</li></ul> <p><u>AdHoc Recruitment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Ann Henders</li><li>○ Caroline Pestieau</li><li>○ Jaime Lenet</li></ul>
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## **Communications and Outreach**

The last year was a busy one for outreach. The Communications Committee diligently kept Carty House's Facebook and Twitter feeds up-to-date, posting approximately two to four items per week. Our twitter followers number 181. We ended 2015 with 123 people who liked our FB page. Up from 51 likes on Jan. 1, 2015.

Carty House also received significant mainstream press this year. The Ottawa Sun featured a story about Carty House on its front page in October. The Carty House Green Door fundraiser was also featured in an article on Ottawa arts and entertainment website Apartment 613 as well as in an article in Ottawa Community News.

The Carty House newsletter was issued three times, in spring, summer and fall. It was emailed to approximately 330 contacts. Another 50 supporters received the newsletter by mail.

We also participated in a number of community outreach activities, such as hosting a table at the Mayor's Public Forum on the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Efforts in October where we handed out dozens of pamphlets and introduced a number of people to the charity. We also attended an excellent information session and networking event offered by 'Refugee 613' and 'Welcome Refugees Ottawa' in November. We partnered with a couple of different yoga studios to raise money and awareness about Carty House.

## **Fundraising, Grants and Donations**

Carty House has a strong base of loyal donors who are committed to supporting us annually. Their ongoing support was reflected in the generous response to our raffle, the annual appeal, Ride for Refuge and the annual fundraising dinner at the Green Door restaurant.

The Fundraising and Grants committees merged in 2015 and developed a strategic revenue-generating plan, which identified priorities for 2016. Unfortunately, we did not receive as many grants as we had hoped for in 2015. The funding priorities of granting organizations changed to emphasize funding for specific projects rather than ongoing programs or operations. This presented a challenge for Carty House due to our limited capacity to create and manage projects and fulfill extensive associated reporting requirements.

More positively, Carty House maintained a strong relationship with the May Court Club of Ottawa. Their ongoing support gave our residents access to over-the-counter medications, first aid supplies and crucial health and dental treatments.

Carty House received a major donation of 4 computers along with free support and maintenance services from Intega IT, an Ottawa IT Support Company.

We are also grateful for the generosity of community members, such as Moksha Yoga and Elevate Studio, who raised money on our behalf by hosting events and other Fundraising activities. The folk band 'The Wooden Sky' afforded us the opportunity to reach out to packed NAC audiences on two evenings and gave us a substantial contribution. Other significant donations came from the Advisory Committee for Women at Justice Canada, Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and the Canadian Women's Foundation Campaign to End Violence.

### **Partnerships**

The Board Executive met with Lucila Spigelblatt, deputy ED at Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI) to learn about possible partnership opportunities and with Miriam Rawson, ED at Matthew House to learn and gather information about their operational model and governance.

We participated in all Refugee Network of Ottawa (ReNoO) meetings and in World Refugee day activities. We also contributed to discussions on homelessness as a member of a sub-committee of Refugee 613, a group co-ordinating Ottawa's response to the global refugee crisis.

### **2016 Board Objectives**

1. Create two ad hoc committees for staff recruitment and for Board recruitment to fill vacancies on the Board due to end-of-term positions
2. Recruit an Executive Director and new Program Coordinator to reflect a changed staffing model
3. Address selected topics from the Welcome Home Support Program Evaluation report written by Mary Peters in March 2014
4. Ensure a high occupancy rate of residents in Carty House and the necessary level of service they require
5. Increase the number and the success rate of grant applications
6. Develop more partnerships with like-minded Ottawa organizations

We would like to thank all Board members who assumed lead roles in Communications, Fundraising and other Board projects. Thank you also to our staff, members of the various committees and volunteers for the countless hours they have devoted towards building capacity in Carty House.

We are very appreciative of every individual and organization that has supported us during the year, and could not have achieved the successes we did, without your help.

Lorna Book  
Board Chair