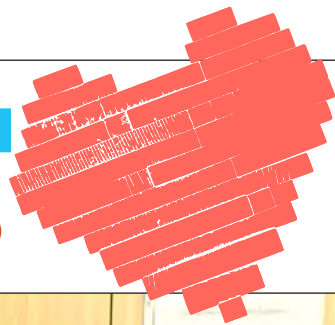




Our Love Letter to You

Gratitude Report 2025



**Because of your generosity, compassion and support,
life is a lot sweeter.**

With gratitude and appreciation, Team NCC

Making The Community a Better Place For All

For Brenda Ibey, supporting the New Canadians Centre is not only a way to show appreciation for the generous community in which she lives, but it is a way to enrich that community.

"It makes it a better place when we support our community and lend a hand to boost people up," she says.

One of the many reasons she supports newcomers is because her family knows first-hand what it means to be one. Though Brenda was born in Canada, her parents gave up a lot to emigrate from the Netherlands in 1955. Her mother was unable to see her own mother for nine years!

Brenda has since gone back to the Netherlands on many occasions and has heard many stories about her parents' struggles on first arriving in Canada. These stories provide her with a special appreciation for newcomers and the work done by the New Canadians Centre to support them in their transition.

"Because of my family being immigrants, it's always close to my heart to think about the struggles that these folks go through when they get to Canada," Brenda says. "We're very fortunate to live here and I just love to share our country with other people and love seeing the diversity and new perspectives they bring to our country as well."

Unlike many small businesses during the pandemic, Brenda's business, Avant Garden Shop, did very well thanks to the generous support of the community. This made her eager to give back.

So, when she heard about a group of kind hearted people who were teaming up to sponsor a young Syrian man named Rashid in coming to Canada, she knew she had to help. She donated to their efforts to bring him to Peterborough



Rashid and Brenda

and continues to support efforts to get the rest of his family to Canada.

But that is not enough for Brenda! Through her business, she is a community fundraiser for the New Canadians Centre, donating \$3 from every sale of products by Peace by Chocolate, a Canadian company founded by a family of Syrian refugees. By the end of this year, she predicts she will have donated close to \$2,000 through the chocolates.

She also stocks New Canadians Centre tote bags and t-shirts from which all sales go directly to the organization.

"I like to share, and I think it is important for us to support our community," Brenda says. "It makes you feel good and makes them feel good."



Brenda and her husband Clayton

With your help, we can continue enrich the community and make it a better place for everyone!

"The Universal Sign Is A Smile"

Volunteering with the New Canadians Centre for several years has changed the way Christie Mynott sees the people and world around her.

"It really gives you humility," she says. "You don't think about yourself anymore."

While Christie and her husband Richard were helping two refugee families re-settle within Peterborough, she realized she most enjoyed helping them learn English. She began shadowing a teacher and eventually took over leading the New Canadians Centre's weekly beginner classes, helping newcomers not only learn the language, but, more importantly, make connections.

"The whole idea of going into the classroom is not so much to make them learn English, but to make them feel very, very comfortable to the point where they can start tying a few words together with other people," Christie says.

"The universal sign is a smile, and I get that in my class all the time. Once you have that one universal smile, there is a connection."

So enthralled and rewarded by the volunteering she does, Christie began hosting an unofficial additional hour after the weekly Tuesday classes for more advanced students. She does this to further strengthen these bonds between students and to help more and more newcomers find comfort in their new home.

"I've travelled and I've gone to foreign countries where I don't know the currency, laws, and language, and it's a really scary feeling," Christie says. "I can

only just imagine these people under the circumstances they're under coming into our country, and having all this going on and then not being able to speak English on top of it."

Throughout 2024, Christie also used her nursing background to support the Peterborough Newcomer Health Clinic, where she found joy in getting to connect with families even more. Spending so much time supporting the New Canadians Centre has helped her gain an appreciation, and she now encourages others to do the same.

"I was very nervous starting to do this because I did not think I knew how, but you have to keep thinking about where they've come from and that you're there to help them - then it comes very easily. Do not be afraid of trying anything new."

"We are very multicultural in Peterborough but I never actually thought about where newcomers come from, how they are settling in, and what they had to leave to get there," she says.

Help us continue to build a connection with one smile at a time.



Christie (second from left) and some of her students

Building Her Own Path

At just 23 years old, Yara Hajhasan has designed an inspiring future for herself that involves living her dream.

Yara was born in Syria but like so many others, her family had to relocate to Jordan for their safety when she was still just a young child. Though she thought she would only be there for a few months, they lived in Jordan for five years before moving to Canada with the help of a private sponsor.

In Cobourg, she settled into ninth grade at the Cobourg Collegiate Institute while adjusting to a life in Canada presented a major culture shift from what she was used to.

"I was really nervous. Everything is new - the people, the language, and even the school life is very different than the Middle Eastern schools," she says. "It was difficult, especially the language barrier, but there were very nice people here from the New Canadians Centre that helped me."

Though her English was not strong when she moved, Yara was dedicated and studied hard to complete her classes, while the New Canadians Centre helped the family gain their citizenship.

During this time, Yara discovered she really likes both art and math. With these passions, she found a post-secondary program studying architectural technology at Georgian College. Now, she is working at the Andrew Smith Building Design Inc. in Cobourg.

Though she is thinking about pursuing more education, she is currently enjoying doing a job that allows her to draw, while spending her free time with her



family in Cobourg—a place that now feels like home.

"I really love it," she says about Cobourg. "It is a nice town and the people here are very nice. They are so sweet."

Though Yara was fierce in her determination and passions to build her own future, she remains grateful to volunteers and staff of the New Canadians Centre for supporting her and her family during a challenging time.

"We appreciate it. We needed their help in a lot of stuff, especially in a new country and a new language," she says. "They were there for us."

With your help, we can continue to be there for newcomers and to help make Canada feel like home!

Building Confidence, Connection, And Community

Moving to Canada meant Maryam Azizi was leaving behind a life she knew for one of uncertainty. But by becoming a vital member of the Cobourg women's group, she quickly found her community and her purpose.

"You can find more and more friends, and you can find different cultures," she says. "It's very good for everyone to be a volunteer and it helps to gain confidence."

In 2024, after months of hardships preparing for immigration, Maryam, with her husband and sons, moved to Cobourg with four suitcases and the goal of being the same "independent woman" she was in Iran. This, however, was not easy since she was facing a new culture, learning a new language, and didn't have any friends nearby.

But after attending an event, Maryam knew she wanted to volunteer with the New Canadians Centre, and, before long, she led her first cookie-baking workshop, where she combined her past experiences as a baker and teacher in Iran.

"I enjoy teaching and if I know something, I like to share it with people," she says.

By leading various cooking workshops for the women's group, she has introduced other newcomers to traditional Iranian cuisine and one of her traditional drinks was even featured in both the 2024 and 2025 Around the World Northumberland event.

"It's very nice the NCC does this for us, because we don't feel alone, especially for women who don't have a job," Maryam says.

"In my country we have jobs, we have our friends, family, and other things, but here we are very alone, and these events and these workshops help us get to know every body."

Maryam has also participated in other women's group programs at the Northumberland location, including planting and Zumba activities, English classes, and cafe gatherings. By building her confidence and improving her English, as well as making connections, she has continued to volunteer in schools and local charities and found a job as a baker. She hopes to one day launch her own pastry business.

Meanwhile, she encourages other friends in her life to volunteer, noting that it helped her build a new life in Canada.

"I thank NCC so much and I hope someday I can help and be useful to other people."



Maryam and her delicious baking

From Newcomer to Staff

A determined and selfless mother, Nooria Quraishi is an inspiration, showing how acts of generosity can not only change others' lives, but can transform your own, as well.

Nooria came to Canada from Afghanistan in 2022 with her husband, aging mother-in-law, and five children who are now between the ages of four and fourteen. As she navigated the challenges of building a life in an unfamiliar country and continent, Nooria found support through the New Canadians Centre. Through kindness and her own optimism, she was able to find



Nooria (third from left) with her colleagues at the NCC

halal food and build a home for herself and her family in the community.

"It made me hopeful to continue my life in Peterborough," she says.

Since arriving, she has been active in participating in the Life Skills program organized by the Case Management team. Through these programs, she has developed valuable skills like using Google Drive and Google Maps, as well as how to navigate larger systems like healthcare and banking in Canada.

"Every country has their own laws, and the lifestyle is different from my country," Nooria says. "At the beginning, it was not

easy for me, but when I got the training, it helped me to get more familiar day by day."

In Afghanistan, Nooria was doing important work helping women in business and helping new graduates develop the skills to find employment. This desire to help others followed her to Canada where she has volunteered to support newcomer families like her own. Since she knows firsthand the challenges of coming to a new country, she has helped families from Afghanistan adjust to their new life by driving them to appointments, translating for them, and just being their friend.

While helping others, Nooria has been building a good life for herself as well. Within her first year of being in Peterborough, she enrolled in the Accounting and Payroll Administration program at Oxford College, fostering her love for business and math.

"It was my dream to get a job with NCC," she says. "NCC helped me a lot, so I would like to pay it back."

Having completed her studies, this summer, Nooria was hired as a part-time finance and administrative assistant with the New Canadians Centre. She can always be found making new friends at events while giving back to the community that welcomed her and her family.



Because of You, the New Canadians Centre has been inspiring, encouraging and helping newcomers feel like they belong for more than 45 years.



221 Romaine Street Peterborough, ON K9J 2C3
www.nccpeterborough.ca

For more information on how you can help, contact **Asuka Ballantyne, Fund Development Officer,**
asuka@nccpeterborough.ca | 705-743-0882 | Cell: 705-761-8019

Review our 2024-2025 AGM report to see how your support changes lives:
bit.ly/NCC_2025