

2019 Waterloo Region Newcomer Landlord Award

Waterloo Region has always welcomed immigrants and refugees. The Waterloo Region Newcomer Landlord Award recognizes landlords that go above and beyond to provide affordable housing solutions for recent immigrants and refugees.

The winners of the 2019 Newcomer Landlord Award show how landlords are helping to create a caring community that supports newcomers. The stories of how they and past award winners provide innovative, flexible, affordable and caring housing solutions for recent immigrants and refugees are shared at: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca.

2019 Newcomer Landlord Award winners

Kathy and Tim Elliott

“When we make sure those who have been dislocated have a home, our rental properties become a lot more than financial investments,” say Kathy and Tim Elliott, who have been involved in helping refugees with affordable housing in Waterloo Region for many years. They contacted Reception House with a specific objective in mind: to find a large refugee family to welcome them into their rental townhouse, with a fully renovated kitchen and near downtown Kitchener. From the beginning, they made sure the family felt welcomed. They kept the cost of the unit low and did not require a last month's rent deposit. They even learned a few Somali and Arabic words to communicate with the family. Their spirit of collaboration and kindness have had a tremendous positive impact on our community.

Alykhan Damji

Alykhan Damji owns a beautiful recently renovated duplex on King Street in downtown Kitchener. He kept the price for both units very affordable considering the location and renovations. He thinks that, *“landlords looking for more than the typical property investment can make an investment in people by providing affordable housing to refugees.”* Alykhan contacted Reception House and did not hesitate to rent his property to a refugee family with four small children. He and his family warmly welcomed their tenants with words of support and encouragement. Alykhan Damji generously offers help and support where needed no matter the time invested. What matters to him is the happiness of others.

Vive Development

Vive Development strives to provide high-quality attainable housing with a focus on community, innovation and sustainability. As a result, welcoming newcomers into the Kitchener community is a priority for this company. *“As Canada continues to welcome refugees, it is important for all landlords to consider how they can play a role in providing a warm welcome for these families,”* reflects Lindsey Bett, at Vive Development. This company has worked collaboratively with Reception House to take in refugee families to its multi-unit housing accommodations which they rent at very affordable rates. At Vive Development, both employer and employees are well known for thinking outside the box and encouraging others to do the same.

Benjamins Realty Inc.

Jake Benjamins and his sons have a noble purpose in their lives: giving a hand to those who need it in a very crucial moment in their lives. They decided to rent a downtown Kitchener apartment to a refugee mom and her child even though they knew they wouldn't be making the profit they would if they had decided to rent it in the regular market. *“I considered advertising and getting a tech sector tenant, but then I remembered refugees and decided to offer this apartment at a reduced rate to one of these families,”* says Jake Benjamins. They also furnished the apartment with some of the essentials the family would need, conferring with them to make sure the purchases would be suitable. Jake Benjamins put into practice two very important values our society needs today: kindness and compassion.

Marlene and Frank Hoekstra

For Marlene and Frank Hoekstra, *“the opportunity for a landlord to offer a place of safety, peace and hope to a refugee in a time of great uncertainty creates the kind of region we love to call 'home'.”*

Frank and Marlene Hoekstra are wonderful people who devote themselves to the service of others – especially those who are most vulnerable. They have a long history helping refugees. As members of the Open Homes Network, they provide temporary housing accommodations to refugee claimants in collaboration with the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support. Though they have a separate one-bedroom apartment suite that would be quite valuable to rent at market rates, they have chosen to share it at a minimal cost with those in need. Frank and Marlene Hoekstra do incredible things to improve other people's lives, going the extra mile in unexpected ways. They become a neighbor, friend and supportive ally who journeys with newcomers in their first months in Canada.

For information about how you can provide housing for newcomers contact:

Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership
519-575-4757x3171
ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca
www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca

