

2022 Waterloo Region Newcomer Landlord Award

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 2022 Newcomer Landlord Award help create a caring community that supports newcomers. The stories of how they and past award winners provide innovative, flexible & affordable housing solutions for newcomers & refugees are shared at: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca.

2022 Newcomer Landlord Award winners

Lisa Weiler Haskins and Richard Hamming

After Wellesley couple Lisa Weiler Haskins and Rich Hamming watched the images and heard the real life stories of the Ukrainian people as they took shelter from the war, they decided to open up their own home to the Gurtovyi, a Ukrainian family of four. Richard recalls the stories from his grandparents and parents as they emigrated from Holland during the Second World War. “It was a very challenging time for my grandparents who were trying to carve out a new life with a young family. Opening our home is a way to honour them,” says Richard. Lisa contacted the Ukrainian family through the Waterloo Region Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis group. “Being a part of this group has provided me with an opportunity to learn from others in the field and to facilitate workshops for community members who were also considering opening their homes,” recognizes Lisa who has been leading the housing team of the group as a volunteer with incredible energy and dedication. With great generosity, the couple recently offered one of their rental units to the Ukrainian family when it became available.

Heidi Sproule

Heidi Sproule housed a Ukrainian family of four fleeing the war. After watching footage of the war and hearing victims' first-hand accounts on social media, she felt compelled to help. “I couldn't imagine waking up one morning to bombs in my city. As a mother, I couldn't stop thinking about what the children would be going through and how scared parents must have been,” reflects Heidi. As she walked through her hosting experience, she shared processes, barriers and helpful hints with others who wanted to help as well. Heidi was a fierce advocate for her Ukrainian guests. She continues to support them as they start their life in their new independent home. Heidi highly recommends opening our home to a family in need as she ensures that “We had a very positive experience. I feel that I have taught my children the importance of helping out fellow human beings, we made new friends, and we learned so much about Ukrainian culture as well. It is rewarding in so many ways but the most important thing is that you would be helping to keep a family safe.”

Woolwich Community Health Centre

The Woolwich Community Health Centre offered to take on the responsibility of the Woolwich Guest House for Ukrainians in transition by providing health care, mental health and maternity supports. The Centre was also motivated to fund the paid onsite coordinator, collaborate with community resources and groups, partner with settlement services and coordinate volunteer support for food and clothing. “We have worked closely for over 25 years with local grassroots group Woolwich Healthy Communities and they identified an opportunity to

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respond to the needs of people affected by the war in Ukraine by approaching the owner of a vacant 10 bed guesthouse in St Jacobs,” says Rosslyn Bently, Woolwich Community Health Centre Executive Director. She encourages other landlords to welcome newcomers and be willing to take the first step. Rosslyn ensures that “Newcomers make amazing tenants. They are very motivated to make a new life for themselves in Canada. They are hungry to learn and contribute too. They just need a chance to shine.”

Open Homes KW

Open Homes KW has been supporting hosts who house refugees since 2015. They have a community of experienced hosts and a successful housing model that have helped shape the Waterloo Region Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis group’s housing process. Through the leadership of staff Isaiah Ritzmann and Lisa Shuh, Open Homes KW has developed a series of webinars educating new hosts on housing refugees, shared resources and built a network of hosts and support circles. “Every host family is unique, but many share common motivations such as sharing, relationships, and faith. (...) there is experience of the richness and value of cross-cultural relationships, and the kind of relationships that can emerge when sharing one’s home,” affirms Isaiah who sees the work that Open Homes KW is doing as central to preparing our society to welcome more people.

Moe Hansrod

Moe Hansrod and his team at KW Property Management have walked Ukrainians through the rental process. Always professional and helpful, Moe has reached out to settlement workers to discuss barriers to immigrant housing and landlord responsibilities. He went through the same experience as an immigrant. “*As an immigrant myself, my family knows firsthand the challenges of navigating a new life in a foreign land, so thus from our journey here, we can empathize with all newcomers,*” says Moe. Through his work at KW Property Management, Moe Hansrod went above and beyond to offer a unit in Kitchener to a Ukrainian family seeking refuge. Moe feels that helping newcomers find a home is a rewarding job. He thinks that “*The feeling of helping grateful prospective tenants is unmatched and seeing them thrive and knowing you had a part in it is very special.*”

Chinh Pham, Tho Tran and Tony Pham

For many years, Chinh Pham, his son Tony Pham and his daughter in law Tho Tran have helped Reception House to secure houses for refugee families regardless of family size. “*Tony and Tho recently rented two houses to our refugee families, one of them is a family of 8. (...) Chinh also rented two apartment units to two families at a very affordable price compared to the market,*” says Abeer Mbaraka from Reception House. In addition to providing affordable solutions to refugees, they become close to the families by treating them in a fair and friendly manner, establishing professional relationships with them and being accessible in the event of an emergency. Chinh’s experience as a refugee from the Vietnam War motivated him to get involved in helping refugees in the region. “I highly recommend all landlords to consider providing housing to recent immigrants and refugees because from my experience, they are all very respectful and friendly tenants. They appreciate that you are providing them with accommodation and will take good care of your property. You will develop good relationships with them and they will become like family,” states Chinh.

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