

2017 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 2017 Newcomer Landlord Award show how small landlords, large landlords and non-profit organizations are helping to create a caring community that supports newcomers. The full 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.

2017 Award Winners

Farida Allie

Farida Allie has been involved in helping newcomers find affordable housing in Waterloo Region for many years. As both a landlord and Real Estate Broker she works with people who are looking to buy or rent properties. "I know that for newcomers it is much more challenging," Farida says.

Farida often goes out of her way to make immigrants and refugees feel at home and to help them with the exceptional challenges that they face. She has been flexible with move-in dates for refugees who arrive mid-month and does not require additional paperwork like proof of income, credit check, etc. She has allowed for shorter leases while newcomers adjust and look for a permanent home. She understands what newcomers are going through and will spend time talking to tenants about how they can access community resources and referring them to services. The person who nominated her for the Newcomer Landlord Award points out that "Money has never been her motivation."

"My policy for the last 13 years as a landlord has been to open my door to anyone looking for housing," reflects Farida. She doesn't believe that renting to newcomers is risky since the rental income is often guaranteed and the tenants are usually very respectful and appreciative. She points out that just because an immigrant who just arrived in our community doesn't have a current job, a solid credit history or references doesn't mean they won't be excellent tenants.

"With the support that newcomer settlement agencies offer during the tenancy in overcoming language barriers or providing information and documentation," Farida points out, "it should put a lot of potential landlord concerns to rest."

Farida looks forward to the time, hopefully soon, when the community at large will learn to integrate newcomers well and finding housing for newcomers will not really be such a challenge.

Crystal Cormier (Northview Apartment REIT)

Crystal Cormier works as a Site Administrator for Northview Apartment REIT in Kitchener. She recently helped a refugee sponsor group from Erb Street Mennonite Church to find affordable housing for their sponsorship family. “It was clear that she understood the huge cultural adaptation necessary to living in an apartment in a strange city and would do all that they could to ease that process” the sponsor said when nominating Crystal for this Award.

Crystal understood that sponsors were given very short notice of the imminent arrival of the new family and accommodated an earlier move-in date. She and her staff spent extra time to help the newcomer family understand everything from smoke alarms to how to use the laundry machines and how to access community services in the area.

Crystal remembers when she was first contacted by Erb Street Mennonite Church. “They were looking for a safe, clean and affordable place that their large newcomer family could call home. I was excited to show them around our property and even happier that they chose us! It makes me feel like I’m part of their community.”

Crystal encourages other landlords “to look at every person as a viable applicant no matter where they come from or their background and to provide them with a safe and secure place they can call home.”

House of Friendship, Reception House Waterloo Region & Kiwanis Club of Kitchener-Waterloo

This award recognizes the partnership of three local organizations to create a house for refugees settling in Waterloo Region. House of Friendship, Reception House Waterloo Region and the Kiwanis Club of Kitchener-Waterloo came together in 2016 to repurpose a house that had previously been used to support youth in our community.

This house is a single family home in a traditional Kitchener neighbourhood and facilitates a sense of belonging for new Canadians moving into our community. Thanks to the generosity of the Kiwanis Club of Kitchener-Waterloo and House of Friendship, Reception House will be able to keep rent affordable for the refugees they support in this home for years to come. Having a larger home with multiple bedrooms makes this an ideal home for larger families who often have a difficult time finding affordable housing.

The creative partnership that resulted in this affordable housing solution for newcomers can be an example for other service clubs, non-profits, organizations or faith communities – some of which may have properties that they find increasingly difficult to maintain. John Neufeld, Executive Director of House of Friendship points out, “We need to all work together collaboratively to try to find unique housing options for the many different individuals and families our organizations serve.”

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–John Neufeld, House of Friendship

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

Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership
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www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca

