



NEWS RELEASE

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École St. Matthew School community welcomes refugee family

The two-year journey to bring a Burundian refugee family to Saskatoon concluded late Thursday evening when flight AC1129 landed and a family of seven was reunited.

Most of the family arrived last week, but there was not enough space on the flight out of Rwanda, so one family member was left behind and booked on this week's flight out.

The family is among almost a quarter-million refugees who fled the small eastern African country's years-long civil war.

In partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, members of the school community spent several months planning before launching a fundraising campaign February 4, 2016. St. Matthew was the first Saskatoon school to take the 1000 Schools Challenge to privately sponsor a refugee family.

A refugee sponsorship committee, co-chaired by parents Krista Schreiter and Danielle Schock, included St. Matthew students, staff, parents and members of the Catholic School Community Council.

"Support from the whole community has been amazing, and it's been a great experience for our students and families to see that we can make a real difference in the lives of others," said Schreiter. "At the beginning, it seemed like a long journey. We wanted to get the family here quickly and welcome them into our community. But the amount of work and fundraising activities has made the time go so fast."

Initiatives to raise the estimated \$30,000 to sponsor the family included a bake sale, talent show, fun night and a cabaret featuring Saskatoon's The Barrelmen. Many members of the school community also made charitable donations. All the household items and furniture were also donated.

"We are all so excited to finally see and welcome the family to our community," said Schock. "We were a bit nervous when we learned the whole family wouldn't be coming at once. But they're here and safe; that's what's important."

"There's lots of work to make sure they get settled into their new home. We're in this for the long haul to support the family in whatever ways they need—including getting the children to school and helping the parents find work."

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