

Chebucto News

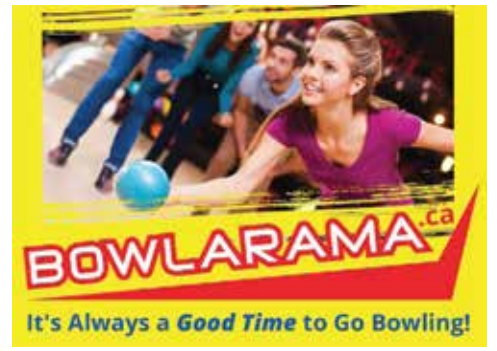
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The Khalaf family hope to reunite with their 2 adult daughters and their families who had to remain behind in Jordan

Local group fundraising to reunite Syrian family with their daughters

by Lorrie Boylen

Talal and Fayrouz Khalaf come from Daraa in Southern Syria, where Talal taught auto mechanics at a local high school. They were forced to flee their home and war torn community and spent four years in a refugee camp in Jordan before coming to Canada last January with eight of their ten children as government sponsored refugees. Heartbreakingly, they were forced to leave behind their two adult daughters, Noor and Rabiya, together with their husbands and four young children in Jordan, who require separate sponsorship in order to be admitted to Canada as refugees. Imagine surviving the horrors of war and

the camps, only to suffer agonizing separation and constant worry about family left behind.

In Canada it's common to have an abstract idea that refugee camps are a safe refuge. But it's a harsh life in the camps, with no water and power services and little or no food. The UN is meant to provide food and supplies but they often don't make it to their destinations, leaving refugees starving and desperate. To make matters worse, in Jordan, Syrians are not legally allowed to work and earn a living in order to feed their families.

Talal and Fayrouz met Betty Cogle at the elementary school attended by their children. Betty began

organizing a group of community members from Spryfield and around the Sambro Loop to form the Khalaf Family Reunion Community Fund (KFRCF) to sponsor the daughters and their families so that the entire Khalaf family can once again be reunited. It's a huge financial undertaking, requiring \$54,000 in money and/or in-kind donations to support the families' start up costs of furniture, household items, food staples, and 12 months of income support.

The members of the group are not wealthy and the task initially seemed quite daunting. However, the youngest member of the group, Melissa Stewart, with a mixture of insight and

youthful optimism, broke down their goal and helped them realize it was within their reach. Melissa and her grandparents then went on to raise \$900 from friends attending the 80th birthday of her grandfather, Captain Bill Stewart.

The KFRCF is accepting monetary donations of any amount to help them achieve their goal. Tax receipts will be provided for donations \$10 and over. Please include your full mailing address with your donations to ensure you receive your tax receipt can be mailed to you. Cheques should be made payable to St. James United Church Sambro, and please indicate in the memo section "For Khalaf Family Reunion Community Fund" to ensure your donation is directed to the right account. Cheques can be mailed to St. James United Church at 3811 Old Sambro Road, Sambro, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3V 1G2. For those preferring to donate online, this can be done at www.sambrojollimoreunited.org.

The group has made huge progress already and as of just before Christmas had raised about \$21,000. Many hands make light work and with help, they can reach their financial goal and submit the application by the end of January since there is a significant backlog in application processing times through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The Khalaf family story has touched the hearts of music legends Denis Ryan and Tony Quinn, who have scheduled a benefit concert at St. James United Church in Sambro on Sunday, January 8, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$10 for youth age 13-16 and \$5 for children age 12 and under and can be purchased at www.EventBrite.ca under the event name "Denis Ryan & Tony Quinn - A Concert for the Khalafs".

(See Local group on page 2)

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Ilsley community works through work-to-rule

by Ciara Harris

The month of December is usually filled with events and activities for the students of JL Ilsley High School. There are basketball, hockey and volleyball games; holiday themed noon-hour events; talent shows; coffee houses; food drives; bake sales; and a peace café. This year, however, the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union has taken a job action called "work-to-rule." After about a year without a contract, teachers across the province have begun teaching to the letter of their former contracts, which means that they do not spend their own personal time facilitating sports, clubs, extra-curricular activities and extra help sessions.

There is no question that this has been a frustrating and disappointing time for students. That said, there has been very strong support for our teachers at JL Ilsley High School. Our

school has clubs and activities that appeal to everyone. Most students understand that none of these activities happen in the absence of our teachers, and without our teachers giving up their own personal time. On any given day, evening, or weekend, Ilsley teachers are supporting their kids. Ilsley students, as a community, wanted to return that support.

On December 2nd, before work-to-rule began, the Ilsley student body staged a walk-out to draw attention to the frustrations of their teachers who were still without a contract. Unlike other student walk-outs around the province, Ilsley students made the choice to give up their own lunch hour to protest. This served two purposes; students were focused on their education and didn't want to give up class time, and they also wanted to reflect the personal time that teachers give

up to support their education. "This was a great way to give back and show support for my teachers," says grade 12 student Kiara Sexton.

Ilsley students are hopeful that the job action will not last much longer. They have a contingency plan, and say that their Christmas Week activities will take place as soon as work-to-rule is over. For a school that is usually bustling with activity, it will be a good day when things go back to normal; for students as well as for teachers. Everyone in the Ilsley community hopes that day will come soon.

Local group

(continued from page 1)

The storm date is Tuesday, January 10th, 6:30 p.m.

Through private sponsorships such as this, more supports can be put in place. One issue with many Syrian refugees is the language barrier, as English can be a difficult language to acquire and there are not enough supports in place.

Talal worked at McPhee Ford in Dartmouth for six months as part of an internship through ISANS and is currently studying English at Dalhousie University and looking for work as a mechanic.

For more information or to help, contact Betty Cogle at 902 477-5366, email khalaffamilyreunion@gmail.com, or check out the group's Facebook page called Khalaf Family Reunion Community Fund.

(Lorrie Boylen is a Writer, Administrative Professional and CBC Radio's Community Contact for Sambro)

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