

Bursary for Syrian refugees set up by student residence in Quebec City

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needs of the victims of these calamities; they also make us realize the importance of mutual solidarity marked by Christian charity. Since 2011, Syria has been ravaged by civil war. The fighting has left more than 240 000 dead according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. About 4 million Syrians have fled their country. Another 4 million have had to leave their homes. For the past 5 years an estimated 2 million children have not been able to go to school due to the conflict. This situation has motivated the Haratan Foundation in Quebec City to set up a 'Syria-Boisgomin' bursary to accommodate three young Syrian refugees at Boisgomin Student Residence which is managed by the Foundation.

"The idea emerged spontaneously after hearing the news that our Syrian resident gave us about his country," said Yves St-Maurice,

president of the Haratan board. “Shells were falling on the houses of his friends in Aleppo, city residents were deprived of water and electricity, schools and universities were closed, preventing young people from continuing their education. It was terrible. We thought that if we could get three students out of that hellish situation, we should give it a try.”

A fundraising campaign was therefore launched. Each person drew up a list of friends and began soliciting them one by one; the young people participating in activities at Boisgomin had promotional bracelets made and started wearing them and selling them to their friends. The parish of one of the Foundation’s members even adopted the Syria-Boisgomin bursary as their Advent project and presentations were made at the end of Sunday Mass asking for donations.

The campaign has already allowed us to bring a first Syrian student to Quebec City. His name is Jad and he wants to do a Master's degree in biomedical engineering at Laval University. "I was welcomed like a brother at Boisgomin. They helped me to enroll in French courses and to make appointments with University professors in the field that I am interested in," Jad said. "It is taking me a while to get used to the cold that we get in Quebec in the winter, but we were given good warm coats when we arrived at the airport."

Boisgomin has received requests from two other students should get their visas to come to Canada in the coming months. "We still have a way to go to reach our goal for the fundraising campaign," said Yves St-Maurice, "but we are confident that with people's generosity we will achieve our target. We hope that these students will eventually return

to their native land to help rebuild the country once the conflict has abated.”

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