

**Our Mission:** We are a community of friends who share the love of Jesus Christ with a focus on serving refugee claimant families in Metro Vancouver.



## Czech Refugees Make a New Beginning in Canada

In 2008-2009, JHC was privileged to meet the Pohlodkos and the Miskovics. This large group of sixteen Czech citizens forms five separate families, all related to each other. Although their stories are different from each other, each of them came to Canada for the same reasons.

These families are Roma, a marginalized people group in Europe referred to as gypsies. The families faced police harassment, physical abuse, segregation in schools, and other forms of discrimination. In a society that tends to prefer white, European-Czechs, it became very difficult to survive in their homeland. One by one, each family made their plans to come to Canada, make a refugee claim, and start over.

Living in Canada has not been without its struggles. For some learning English has been easy, for others difficult. Securing employment took a long time, but jobs were found and independence from government support was realized. Through all of the ups and downs of the transition,

we heard a consistent and enthusiastic refrain. They all LOVE Canada and desperately want to make a home here.

In August 2010, four of the families had their hearing at the Immigration and Refugee Board. In this hearing, it was decided that the families were not refugees and did not need Canada's protection. They were devastated. The families and their lawyer did not feel that the law was applied fairly and they appealed this decision. Canada's Federal Court agreed with them and granted them the opportunity to have their claim heard again.

This second hearing was held in August 2011 and concluded in November. On November 7, the Immigration and Refugee Board ruled in their favour and declared that they are in fact convention refugees.

This decision was received with tears and laughter, and resulted in a party that lasted late into the evening. Journey Home would like to congratulate the Miskovics and the Pohlodkos. We say to you all, WELCOME to CANADA!



The Czech Families celebrate a positive decision on the streets of Vancouver

## Professor Reports on Injustices Against Roma

Approximately two years ago Dr. David Scheffel, Professor of Anthropology at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC, visited the office of JHC and indicated he was researching the plight of the Roma (Gypsy) people in Slovakia. In 2011 he conducted a fact-finding mission in the Czech Republic, visiting the region where our JHC Czech families had lived prior to their arrival in Canada.

His findings are stark and indicting and he found that the condi-

tions in the Czech Republic are very similar to those in Slovakia. As a result, Dr. Scheffel became a key witness in the Immigration and Refugee Board hearings for our Czech families.

Dr. Scheffel's research shows that Roma are often excluded from white neighborhoods resulting in what he calls an "apartheid" like situation. While national policy may reflect a more progressive stance toward the Roma, the situation can be different at the municipal level where the "Gypsy issue" is unpopular and the Roma

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# Journey Home Community News

## God's Provision for Refugee Families

### A Personal Impact

B. came to Canada because of the dangers in his homeland and threats on his life. He arrived in a wheelchair which made locating housing a bit more challenging. However, previous to his arrival, a friend of JHC had made her one bedroom condominium available to us and, you guessed it, it was wheelchair accessible! But there was more . . . While at the Missions Fest conference, we made connections with a ministry which collects and supplies wheelchairs to people in need. They had a motorized scooter which they donated to JHC and we passed on to B. God's provisions exceeded our expectations!

B. says that coming to Canada is like coming to a new world. Here he sees people from different ethnicities and religions being friends with each other and his face lights up as he talks about the freedom in Canada.

His dream is to study computer programming and someday purchase his own home. In the meantime, he volunteers at the newly opened Journey Home Thrift Store and has just begun to volunteer at the JH office. He sees the value of connecting with people to assist in improving his English skills and his integration into Canadian society.

### Community Impact

In 2011, JHC assisted 46 families and four singles with some form of support. This included 95 adults and 81 children. The countries served include Afghanistan, Albania, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Guatemala, Hungary, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, North Korea, Russia, and Sri Lanka.



B. arriving for his volunteer shift

- ☀ 11 of these families currently reside in transition housing
- ☀ 33 families currently reside in permanent housing
- ☀ 22 of these families have members of the family that are employed in either full time or part time work. Five of these jobs were secured through connections made by JHC.
- ☀ 12 refugee claims were accepted, 10 refugee claims were denied, and 35 have yet to be determined. 2 refugee claims were withdrawn and the families returned to their home countries.

In October 2011, we witnessed the baptisms of a refugee claimant couple. This event was a celebration of God's grace. Without miracles along the way, this event would not have been possible!

### "Professor Reports ...", continued from previous page ...

people marginalized. There is a coinciding concern about police mistreatment locally with a lack of recourse for victims.

Sheffel cites a community in Slovakia where the mayor and council were developing a project that was sympathetic to providing new housing for the Roma people. The project had the support of the national government and international organizations but in a subsequent municipal election this progressive administration was ousted from power and the project was squelched. As for the free market . . . "The sale of 'white property' to a Romani buyer is considered so heinous an act that its perpetrator faces automatic loss of status in the community." ([www.svinia.org](http://www.svinia.org))

It is for these reasons and others, that Roma people from the Czech Republic and Hungary are seeking peace and safety in Canada and have come to be involved in JHC. We thank Dr. Sheffel for his passion and work in addressing the injustices of the Roma people. He had an important role in the positive determination for the refugee claims of our Czech families.

(See Dr. Scheffel's website [www.svinia.org](http://www.svinia.org))

Journey Home Community would like to acknowledge our partner organizations. Thank you for your support!

# Journey Home Thrift Celebrates Grand Opening

We are very proud to welcome you to the new Journey Home Thrift store at 7337 Edmonds Street, Burnaby BC. We are a new breed of thrift shop.

The store celebrated its grand opening on November 29. We were happy to have Raj Chouhan, MLA/Burnaby-Edmonds, and Paul McDonell, Burnaby City Council in attendance (see photos below). The launch of the store would not have been possible without the hard work of our creative store manager, Carla Wilson. Thank you, Carla!

When people come into Journey Home Thrift, the atmosphere is so different from the average thrift store that almost everyone comments on it. We also have a guest book where people can share their thoughts on our store such as “[it’s a] totally superb store. Clean & organized with so much style” and “very well decorated, clean, nice manners, well organized. Keep up your good work.”

As well as assisting the funding of Journey Home Community, we hope to see the store as a community meeting place where

people can enjoy some time together. Another goal is to provide volunteer work experience to the refugee families in our community. We are always looking for volunteers who would like to help us make this a remarkable place.

If you would like to be a part of the community, our hours are 10 AM-6 PM, Tuesday through Saturday (with the exception of statutory holidays). We would love your assistance through donating your goods or volunteering your time. If you are especially interested in volunteering with us, you can visit [www.journeyhomethrift.ca/volunteer](http://www.journeyhomethrift.ca/volunteer) where you will find more about the volunteer opportunities and the full application.

The website mentioned above, [www.journeyhomethrift.ca](http://www.journeyhomethrift.ca), is a valuable resource should you wish to know more about the store such as upcoming events and sales, volunteer of the month profiles and the non-profit we support. Feel free to visit and share that site!

In closing, a final quote from our guestbook, “you are bringing dignity to thrift store shopping. I love you for that!”



Come by the store to ...

**VOLUNTEER  
YOUR TIME**

**DO YOUR  
SHOPPING**

**DONATE  
YOUR ITEMS**

Thank you to our corporate sponsor:



# Ride for Refuge 2011

The third annual Ride for Refuge was held on October 15, 2011. Journey Home was pleased to register 16 teams and 82 riders for this year's edition. It was a beautiful sunny day and a huge success for JHC!

One of Journey Home Community's volunteers, Melissa Erion, was the captain of the *Hillside Heart Attack* team. She said, "we began the day in a bit of chaos as we awkwardly organized our bikes onto racks and were faced with a car which refused to start. Though we missed the official start of our 10km ride, this did not hinder the spirit of joy and fun as we rode, remembering we were riding not to race, but to raise awareness and support for refugees seeking asylum here. We all enjoyed the beauty of the dyke, cows, Gary Point Park, and airplanes taking off at YVR between our numerous stops to switch bikes, pump tires, and take pictures. What a beautiful day it was!"

Congratulations to Melissa and all of the other volunteers, riders, supporters, and friends. Great work everyone!



## Journey Home Community Ride Report

Goal	Actual
20 Teams	16 Teams
100 Riders	82 Riders
\$21,000 raised*	\$20,000 raised*

\*after Ride admin. expenses

# The Buzz...

## Contest Announcement

We would like to rename our Community Newsletter. Please email your creative suggestions to [brad@journeyhomecommunity.ca](mailto:brad@journeyhomecommunity.ca)

## Christmas Invitation

Everyone is invited to join us for

### *Simply Christmas*

Come enjoy an evening of Christmas celebration including music, conversation, and friendship. Dessert, coffee and tea will be served.

December 10 at 4:00pm

John Knox School—8260 13th Ave., Burnaby BC

RSVP by email: [brad@journeyhomecommunity.ca](mailto:brad@journeyhomecommunity.ca)

## Staffing Update

On November 14, 2011, Journey Home Community was pleased to welcome Laura Mansfield to the position of Housing and Employment Developer. Laura can be reached by email and phone at:

[laura@journeyhomecommunity.ca](mailto:laura@journeyhomecommunity.ca) / 604.612.6930

## Wanted: Housing—Judi

Judi Bastin, a friend of JHC from New Zealand, will be in Vancouver from mid-December to mid-February. She will be volunteering her expertise in our community. We are looking for someone to provide house-sitting / suite/ spare room for Judi's stay.

## Spring Talent Show

Can you sing, dance, or swallow swords? We will be having a talent show this spring. All are invited to participate and attend this event. Look for future announcements about location and date.

For more information on any of the above, contact the JHC office.

## Opportunities for participation in JHC

- Become a volunteer in one of the following:
  - Refugee family support
  - Office help, event planning
- Get involved in the 2012 RIDE for REFUGE
- Join the prayer team
- Volunteer at  JOURNEY HOME COMMUNITY thrift
- Donate quality items to Journey Home Thrift

Contact us for more information about any of the above

THANK YOU for your Support!

## Please consider a financial donation

- You may give online (see our website for link) or mail a cheque
- A year end gift ( we need \$30,000 to meet our 2011 budget ).
- A monthly gift for 2012

### To subscribe or unsubscribe to JHC News:

Journey Home Community  
#105 - 6125 Sussex Avenue Burnaby, BC V5H 4G1  
Phone: 604.568.4892

[info@journeyhomecommunity.ca](mailto:info@journeyhomecommunity.ca) / [www.journeyhomecommunity.ca](http://www.journeyhomecommunity.ca)

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