



[lj]news

LIBRARYJOURNAL

PUBLIC

ACADEMIC

TECHNOLOGY

INDUSTRY

PUBLISHING

RESEARCH

Public Libraries Support Refugees Services abound to help ease difficult transitions

As cities in the United States and Canada receive an influx of Middle Eastern refugees seeking asylum, libraries are using traditional and innovative services to reach out and connect with these populations in crisis.

Salt Lake City is a designated refugee relocation city. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is one agency working to resettle refugees, and it offers guided tours of the Downtown Salt Lake City Public Library (SLCPL) to join refugees with services. Brooke Young, manager at the Glendale Branch of SLCPL, told *LJ* about a community partnership with the University of Utah's University Neighborhood Partners (UNP) program, which works collaboratively with a wide variety of university departments and community agencies.

Louisville, KY, is another U.S. city serving as a refugee resettlement location; area schools report more than 100 native languages are spoken among the student population. Sophie Maier, immigration services librarian with the Louisville Free Public Library (LFPL), partners with local refugee resettlement organizations such as Catholic Charities of Louisville that offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes; at her visits she makes sure new arrivals receive library cards and can then check out books on the spot.

LFPL hosts a variety of showcases that highlight the culture of different immigrant groups including food, music, and other arts. Weekly conversation clubs allow refugees to work on their English skills and meet other immigrants. Maier

has strong relations with local colleges and universities, speaking to communications, nursing, and ethics classes on the needs of refugees and how to support them. She also works to assist professional adults who have left behind careers in their native countries.

An article in the *Calgary Herald* reports that the Canadian city "is expected to take in about ten percent of the 15,000 to 25,000 Syrian refugees" whom the government has vowed to bring to the country by the end of the year.

Kitty Pope, Windsor Public Library (WPL) CEO, noted that WPL staff include several native Arabic speakers; many staffers are bilingual in other languages. Connecting with immigrant and refugee children through programming and outreach allows library workers to make inroads with their parents and caretakers, according to Pope. Story times, along with dual- and native language print collections, are a focal point.

As refugees or new immigrants begin to settle, libraries can offer support and resources for any who experience harassment or are the victim of hate crimes. REFORMA, the National Association To Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, has created a toolkit titled "Responding Effectively to Anti-Immigrant Sentiment." While the resources originally focused on supporting Latino and Hispanic immigrants, the toolkit can easily be used when working with residents from any part of the world.—April Witteveen

LIBRARY OF THE YEAR 2016

All libraries are good, some are great. *LJ* is looking for role model libraries to vie for the honor of 2016 *Library Journal*/Gale Library of the Year. The \$10,000 prize celebrates the library that most profoundly demonstrates service to the community; creativity and innovation in developing specific community programs or a dramatic increase in library usage; and leadership in creating programs that can be emulated by other libraries.

To the extent possible, please send submissions in electronic format such as a Word document or a PDF via email to rmiller@mediasourceinc.com. Mail nominations to: *LJ* Library of the Year Award, *Library Journal*, 123 William St., Suite 802, New York, NY 10038.



POSTMARK DEADLINE: APRIL 5, 2016

Copyright of Library Journal is the property of Media Source, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.