**Refugee Week 2020, 15-21 June – this year’s theme is ‘Imagine’**

**Marlow Refugee Action activities for Refugee Week**

Our aims for Refugee Week 2020 are to raise awareness and to raise funds. We are suggesting three options for getting involved, please consider promoting and/or joining in on any one, or all three, of our ideas.

1. Refugees often have to travel thousands of miles in search of a safe home. We are asking people to walk or run 5k or 5 miles for them. Through this we are hoping to raise £500 for refugees by the end of Refugee Week. Money raised will go to the charity Collective Aid to help with the purchase of a new vehicle for the distribution of aid to refugees and migrants sleeping rough in and around Calais.
2. We are asking individuals and families to swap your beds for sleeping bags and camp out in solidarity with those sleeping rough across Europe. Because of social distancing, we will not be able to come together for a joint sleep-out, but we will be together in spirit, for the night of World Refugee Day 20th June. Our target is to build a virtual camp of 50 people! Money raised will go to agencies helping support refugees sleeping in tents on the island of Samos and in and around Calais.
3. For those who have been missing the freedom to eat out in your favourite restaurant, we have teamed up with the Syrian refugee chef, Imad to enable you to prepare and eat a Syrian feast in your own home. In exchange for the recipes we are inviting you to donate the cost of a meal out to support vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers locally whose situation has become even more challenging as a result of Covid-19.

We would normally be offering local schools’ assemblies to talk to the pupils about why refugees leave their homes, what refugee camps are like and how some refugees end up in the UK. You may know of an assembly we did in in several schools last year where we talked about a young girl called Sara having to leave her home in Syria.

However, this year, at a time when most children in the UK can’t attend school or other organisations where we might have been able to talk to them face to face about refugees, we have developed alternative materials to raise awareness of refugees and the situations they face.

These comprise:

**A video** – [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeDh6XCIels&feature=youtu.be>] produced by two young people from Marlow who have recently been working with refugees in Europe. The video tells their stories, those of some of the refugees they have met, and that of a teenage refugee called Dana who now lives in the UK. We believe that the video is suitable for children from Year 6 upwards, including secondary school students.

**An activity** which helps young people to consider what life as a refugee is like. We propose children, with a parent, should sleep in a tent in their garden but with very limited food, drink and activities for entertainment – for example no hot food, iPads or phones!

If the parents wish they could be sponsored – we have set up a Virgin Money Giving account for this [https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/displayCharityCampaignPage.action?charityCampaignUrl=solidaritysleepout].

Money raised will go to support agencies helping refugees on the island of Samos. It would be lovely to have some feedback on how they found it, with photos if possible.

**Sleepout for Refugees**

Suggested restrictions to help children (and their parents) start to experience how refugees live:

* Sleep out overnight on Saturday 20th June, we suggest you base yourself in and around the tent from mid-late afternoon
* The only items you should have are a tent to sleep in, roll mat, pillow, sleeping bag, layers (to keep warm), a towel, soap, toothpaste and a toothbrush, a book/board game or similar for entertainment, and perhaps a cuddly toy
* No running water – have all the water you need for drinking and washing in a large container
* No phones, iPads or other electronic equipment – charging electrical equipment when you are a refugee is often not possible
* Have cold food for your evening meal and breakfast

**More information about refugees and Marlow Refugee Action.**

As the video says, there are 70.8 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced from their homes – nearly the entire population of the UK. 25.9 million of these are refugees, over half of whom are aged under 18.

57% of refugees come from Syria (6.7million), Afghanistan (2.7million) and South Sudan (2.3million). More details about the worldwide refugee situation can be found on the UNHCR website <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>

Local refugees

During the current Covid19 crisis many refugees in the UK have been working in hospitals to help the NHS. This includes a local refugee, a qualified anaesthetist, Waafa Alnasan, who has been working on the front line of hospitals in London during the pandemic.

Marlow Refugee Action (<https://marlowrefugeeaction.org.uk/>) has in recent months financially supported the following new projects:

* Medical aid for refugees on the island of Samos (via the charity Medequali)
* Food for refugees living in High Wycombe (via the charity Wycombe Refugee Partnership)
* Support costs for a refugee hosted in Marlow

Thank you for your interest

Sarah Jones

Trustee, Marlow Refugee Action