

AUC to raise their voices -- and their bells -- to support Syrian refugees



By Brock Weir

The Chancel Choir and Handbell Ensembles of Aurora United Church tread familiar territory when they raise their voices and their bells to raise money for worthy causes, but next Saturday, April 23, they are coming together to tread new ground.

The two musical mainstays of Aurora United Church (AUC) will gather at Trinity Anglican Church that evening at 7.30 p.m. for "Our Musical Journey," an evening of music to support the Interfaith Refugee Resettlers (IRR), which has brought together AUC, Trinity and the Newmarket Islamic Centre, to sponsor a Syrian family of six in the Aurora area.

In the fall, the Chancel Choir presented a concert for the University Women's Club of Aurora and Newmarket and it was a journey through music with the history of the of the Aurora United Church Choir, says music director Margaret Heney. The Minister mentioned to me it would be nice if the concert could be done again and, at the same time, one of the members of the IRR mentioned it would be nice to have a choir fundraiser, so we put the groups together.

Adds Handbell director Lisa Kyriakides: "Personally, I have supported this initiative from the very beginning personally, and emotionally as well. I think this is a fantastic idea. It is what we should be doing. We should be helping those in need and that is just the way it is."

Ahead of next Saturday's concert, a member of AURA, the Refugee group supporting the IRR in their sponsorship, will speak about the program and provide an update on how the family of six, who arrived at Pearson International Airport just this past winter, are settling in.

According to the IRR, they are settling into their new community tremendously well with the kids enjoying their new school while their parents work diligently to learn English.

Their home setup is complete and, through the generosity of our communities, they have received the technology necessary to keep in touch with those left behind, says the IRR. They have also been embracing new experiences within our community. During March Break, they attended the pantomime of Cinderella and while there is still a language barrier, they were familiar with the story, and the antics of the actors brought laughter to them all.

At the end of the show, our youngest newcomer received a balloon and balloons are apparently the greatest thing in the world! They also enjoyed an outing at the Sugarbush Festival and while it was a cold, wet day, the straw maze was a good laugh, the activities were fun and the maple syrup was delicious. The highlight of the day was riding a pony. The children were so enthralled by the animal and enjoyed the ride so much there were tears when they had to leave.

?They continue to be introduced to their community with tours and introductions. As we edge slowly into spring weather and, soon enough summer sunshine, there will be many more wonderful new experiences for them all.?

Tickets for Our Musical Journey are on sale now. They are \$20 per person and children 10 and under are free. For more information, call 905-727-1935.