

**THE SALVATION ARMY  
IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES**



**THE  
ADVOCATE**

Volume 1 Edition 1  
April 2005

**WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER!**

This is the very first edition of "The Advocate"- the newsletter of The Salvation Army Immigrant and Refugee Services of the Ontario Central Division.

We thought this would be a great way to get our story out to our colleagues, stakeholders and supporters.

Who are we? We are the ministry of The Salvation Army in the Greater Toronto Area to newcomers to Canada.

We provide settlement services, short term crisis counseling, chaplaincy,

English as a Second Language classes, ( in cooperation with the Toronto District School Board) community referrals, and skills development programs. We also provide volunteer opportunities and valuable information sessions for newcomers.

In subsequent editions of this newsletter, we will feature each of our services in detail.

Let us introduce ourselves to you:

**Major Holly Patterson**—  
Director

**Major George Patterson**—  
Business Manager

**Aux. Capt, Mary Avendano**— Chaplain

**Florence Gruer**—  
Settlement Counsellor

**Maisie Wu**—ESL &  
Program Coordinator

**Ivy Hoole**—Administrative  
Assistant & Front Desk  
Worker

**Zhen Li**—Program  
Researcher

**TDSB Teachers:**

Debra Anderson

Anne Campbell-Smith

Ruth Khan

**Placement Student:**

Denise Johnson

George Brown College

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**Dates to Remember:**

- Refugee Rights Day—  
April 4
- Refugee Info Day –  
April 6

**REFUGEE INFORMATION DAY**

On Wednesday, April 6th, Immigrant and Refugee Services, in partnership with the Territorial Department of Refugee Services and Intercultural Ministries will be conducting a Refugee Information Day.

The workshop will take place from 9:00am-3:00 pm in the Calvert Conference Room, Territorial Headquarters at 2 Overlea Blvd in Toronto. Guests will include Rana Khan of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

Dr. Paul Caulford will address mental health needs of newcomers.

To register, contact Major Ruth Kimmins at 416-422-6129 or

Ruth\_Kimmins  
@can.salvationarmy.org

# LUZ'S STORY

This is also now...my dear land!!!!

Toronto, March 3, 2005

By: Luz Elena Restrepo

"...Colombia, my dear land, hymn of peace and happiness..." says a beautiful Colombian song. For a long time, this melody made me sad when I listened to it for two reasons: first, because it brought me pleasant and great memories of my country but I was thousands of miles away from it; second, because I knew that at present there is neither peace nor happiness in Colombia! Just as many other Colombians, I suffered very much due to violence and had to seek protection, because I wanted to save my life. Because of this, I became one more among the displaced people.

As one more displaced person, I arrived at "Vive La Casa" (refugee shelter) in Buffalo. I felt a clash of emotions, because the place is not exactly a holiday resort and the feeling of loneliness and abandonment takes hold of you. The uncertainty about the future and insecurity with respect to the legal situation are oppressive! Nevertheless, hope helped me stay firm in my desire to claim asylum in Canada. I do not regret this decision, because from that day on I have received nothing but benefits from this country. I only had to wait eight days for the interview with Immigration at the border and I was able to enter Canada on January 11, 2004.

The first contact I had with the Canadian environment was the Immigration Officers, who were very kind and respectful towards me. They made me feel that I had value as a person once again, that I had rights and that here there was a government interested in my life and well-being. That day I thought: "this is a good

beginning...". And it really was, because since that moment this country does not cease to amaze me.

I arrived at the house of some friends, who extended me a helping hand for a few days while I went through the process that all refugee claimants must go through, such as: completing the PIF (Personal Information Form), medical exam, application for Legal Aid, application for Social Assistance, etc. After the initial steps, I found accommodation where I can live independently.

This is when I started to receive

*"I suffered very much due to violence and had to seek protection."*

innumerable benefits: my basic financial needs for rent and food are covered through Social Assistance and the Food Bank, Health Insurance and coverage for medicine, money for transportation and English Classes, at no cost to me. As well, I had access to many other free courses.

I feel tremendously thankful!

During this process I have met beautiful persons who have helped to make this experience less difficult for me and who have truly made the difference between **what could have been** and **what has actually happened!** We know and hear of many horrible situations which refugee claimants have gone through who, like us, knocked on the door of this country but were not fortunate to have the help and assessment of persons like Florence Gruer of The Salvation Army, whom I thank with all my heart for her

dedication, love and excellent orientation and counselling. I will never forget her.

This has been the beginning of my new life!!! I thought I would have to wait a long time to have the certainty that my life would be safe. Nevertheless, to my surprise, my Refugee Hearing was held four months after arriving in Canada, which is a record. Due to the evidence provided, my Hearing only lasted 30 minutes. The Immigration and Refugee Board accepted my claim and granted me Political Asylum. Another reason for joy.

I must also give witness to my faith in God, Who has helped me during this whole process. The culmination of all this is that on February 10, 2005 I had an interview at Immigration to receive Permanent Residence in Canada.

I have no words to express my thankfulness to Canada and its institutions for everything they have done for me. Now I am a woman full of hope, who looks to the future with hope and faith!!! Thanks to God and thanks to Canada!!! What a beautiful land, this Canada!!!

Note:

*Refugee claimants are not eligible to work when they arrive in Canada and some, due to PTSD or other issues may not be able to work for a while.*

# PROFILE—MAISIE WU

## ESL & PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Hello, my name is Maisie-- the English As A Second Language (ESL) & Program Coordinator at the Salvation Army Immigrant & Refugee Services Centre. I believe all students know me through the intake process. I immigrated to Canada from China with my family in 2000. Therefore, I am a newcomer, except I am not as new as our clients. Now, my husband is teaching physics in a high school, and my son is a grade-six student.

As an ESL Coordinator, my job is to help students and teachers by creating a warm, friendly and encouraging learning environment so that every student can improve his/her English rapidly. I have gone thorough all the processes that they are experiencing, so I deeply understand what they are feeling. To all our students: If you have any problems with your English study, please come to me, I will do my best to help you. Also, at the break time, I usually stand beside the coffee table to

greet you and talk to you. It is a great chance for us to communicate with each other. Both you and I have been learning profoundly about the diversity of Canada.

Creating afternoon programs is another responsibility of mine. The purpose of afternoon programs is to provide extra help to students who need more chances to learn and practice English. The programs include: English

Conversation Class, English Reading, Comprehension and Pronunciation, English and Spanish Bible Studies, and Learning English from Movies. They have been very successful programs. I

invite all of our students to participate in our afternoon programs.

Finally, I also recruit, screen and supervise all volunteers. Our volunteers include English conversation partners, computer trainers & afternoon program leaders. If you have a few hours to spare and would be interested in volunteering please contact me at 416-360-6036 or Maisie\_Wu@bellnet.ca.

*"I have gone through all the processes that they are experiencing, so I deeply understand what they are feeling."*



## STRATEGIC PLANNING

IRS is currently going through a Strategic planning process. So far, we have explored the concept of planning with Mr. Brian Seim of SIM ministries. We have also reviewed and revised our Mission and Vision Statements

Zhen Li is conducting an environmental scan, examining internal and external factors. Zhen has been interviewing staff members, clients, and

stakeholders as well as other agencies with whom we interact on a regular basis.

Our goal is to obtain a clear picture of the strengths of our service and challenges that face us.

Our desire is to provide



"Failing to plan is planning to fail"

effective, professional services to newcomers. If you have not been contacted, but would like to have input into this process, please contact Zhen Li at 416-360-6036

or  
lzhen\_2000@yahoo.com

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IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES**

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The Salvation Army

[www.salvationist.ca](http://www.salvationist.ca)



**The Salvation Army  
Canada and Bermuda Territory  
Mission Statement**

The Salvation Army exists to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world.

**The Salvation Army  
Ontario Central Division  
Immigrant and Refugee Services  
Mission Statement**

We are dedicated to:

- Supporting immigrants and refugees in their journey toward full participation in Canadian society.
- Advocating for newcomers to live in an inclusive community that is enriched by cultural diversity
- Serving all newcomers with the unconditional love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

## REFUGEE RIGHTS DAY—APRIL 4

This year in Canada we are commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Singh Decision. This is when the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that everyone is entitled to fundamental justice when life, liberty or security of person is at risk.

The Supreme Court recognized that:

- ◇ The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the basic rights and freedoms of **refugee claimants** in Canada;
- ◇ **Refugee determination** must respect the principles of fundamental justice;
- ◇ Fundamental justice requires that, where credibility is an issue, **refugee claimants** must have an oral hearing.

Why do we commemorate Refugee Rights Day?

- ◇ Refugees need a reminder that they are valuable people, that they deserve to be treated with respect.
- ◇ Our society needs to be informed and educated about refugee rights.
- ◇ Our government needs to be reminded of its obligations to refugees.
- ◇ The Church needs to hear that we have a biblical mandate to protect refugees, to welcome them and build them up.

How can we commemorate Refugee Rights Day?

- ◇ Have a refugee share his/her experience with your community;
- ◇ Have a presentation about refugees;
- ◇ Join one of the many activities being organized by refugee groups and community organizations in your city.

Submitted by: Florence Gruer  
March 21, 2005