

UMOJA OPERATION COMPASSION SOCIETY  
NEWCOMERS FAMILY SERVICES CENTRE

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015



**UMOJA**  
NEWCOMERS FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE

31 December 2015

## About Umoja Operation Compassion Society

Umoja Operation Compassion Society of British Columbia is a nonprofit society (88642 5909 RR 0001) formed in 2002 to work with low income immigrants living in the greater Vancouver region, predominately Surrey, BC. Our society seeks and strives to help promote unity, respect, and dignity among minority immigrants and refugees.

New immigrants and refugees can find it difficult to integrate due to obstacles such as poverty, extremely low levels of literacy, unemployment, language barrier, isolation, feelings of hopelessness, mental health issues and depression. Through Umoja Family Services Center, we provide a variety of culturally sensitive programs to help families, children, and youth integrate successfully into their new social environment. Umoja uniquely exists to serve those that are in need and transitions them into main stream community services while fulfilling its Vision and Mission. Our overseas projects focus on Africa, especially the great lakes region of East and Central Africa through Christian education, health and micro financing for deprived women.

## Mission

***Mission: To empower minorities and other refugees to integrate into Canadian society; and to support initiatives to improve the quality of life in the third world."***

## Message from the Chair of the Board of Directors:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank everyone who supported Umoja Operation Compassion Society in 2015. There is no doubt for the Board that the programs are providing a vital service to the community – daily touching the lives of people in a very tangible way. The work that is accomplished is inspiring – a testament to the resourcefulness and dedication of our staff, volunteers and Executive Director.

As I reflect on the year, beyond the ongoing delivery of our programs, a few significant accomplishments come to mind:

1. Launching a Youth Scholarship Program, funded by the family of Michelle Sutter and Robert Elmore
2. Ensuring readiness and support for the Syrian refugees arriving in our community
3. Refreshing and updating our website
4. Holding our first annual gala fundraiser in September
5. Pursuing a variety of creative fundraising programs through Pub Nights, Garage Sales, Birthday Parties and online crowd funding

Beyond the community that Umoja serves here in Surrey, there is also our overseas program in Rwentutu, Uganda, which provides a school/village community hub facility for educational and health professionals to serve children and their families. In April, Rwentutu School celebrated their 10 year anniversary and the completion of a staff house, made possible through our partnership with Broadway church.

Take a few moments to join me in taking some time to reflect on “Umoja”. Unity has long been associated with strength, as demonstrated by the quote from Aesop, believed to be a slave and storyteller in ancient Greece between around 600BC: “In union there is strength”. The name of our organization is no coincidence and we want to ensure that we continue to leverage the strength of “umoja” as a strong foundation from which to deliver our programs and ensure the success of our services to new immigrants and refugees.

In closing, for each of our staff, volunteers, funders and donors, please accept the sincere gratitude of the Board of Directors for ensuring the continued success of Umoja in fulfilling its mission.

Annette Simbabure, Board Chairperson.

### **Message from President/Executive Director**

Amidst funding cuts and the raising number of new immigrants, Umoja Operation Compassion Society has continued to live up to our values. We have been able to fulfil our shared mandate and a good number of new comers have been served. We owe this continued success to our team of dedicated staff as well as a vast group of volunteers. We are so grateful to our partner colleges who have provided practicum students to do their job placement at umoja. These together with volunteers have made our staff even more successful doing their jobs with less stress amidst meagre funding. **Our invaluable appreciation go to our esteemed funders; the United Way of the Lower mainland, the Kenny foundation, the Provincial government through gaming funds as well as the Ministry of Children and Family Development., Through our partnerships with the City of surrey, Options community services and Diversity community services we have been able to deliver the Hand-in-Hand / First Steps program. At the end of 2015 government announced the arrival of 25K Syrian refugees. Without the support of funders mentioned above and the support we have with our community partners, the preparation for the arrival of these new refugees would have been cumbersome.**

### **Overseas Program**

The end of 2015 saw our partnership with the University of Wisconsin come to an end. Rwentutu community has benefitted from this partnership forged forward by Umoja. We are however hoping to re-negotiate this initiative so we can continue to serve the children of Rwentutu through early childhood education. Umoja continues to support initiatives and facilitated funding for the Shiloh orphanage in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo. Our work overseas would not be possible without the support of numerous volunteers and individual donors. Volunteers have spent their valuable time, treasures and talents into this overseas program by physically travelling to Uganda to support our teachers and parents. We extend our thanks to them as well as the various churches; Broadway church, St. Mark Church, the Golden community Ladies group as well who donate funds towards this school.

Amos Kambere, Umoja President/Executive Director.

## 1. Key Achievements/ Successes

### Literacy:

A client confided in Literacy program staff to share her personal challenges living in Canada. Her story is one of depression, isolation, tragedy and loss. As she shared the details of her Canadian experience, it became clear that Umoja is as much about providing a safe, compassionate, and supportive environment as it is a space for learning literacy and life skills. This client went on to say that sometimes the only thing she looks forward to is coming to class as most days she sits in her home alone with no human contact to look forward to. This only makes us wonder how many share her experience and the incredible impact Umoja can make to individuals who find themselves in a similar situation.

### Afterschool Program:

With a restructuring in staffing, Umoja was able to better support families with children 6-12 years old by ensuring language support in Arabic. Client demographics have shifted dramatically in the past 2 years and the majority of clients accessing afterschool programs are Arabic speaking families originating from Iraq, Jordan and Syria. Children experience that Umoja is a welcoming, comfortable environment for them to gain needed support in homework as well as participate in fun activities and games that better support self-esteem and social connectedness.

### Outreach:

Clients consistently come to Umoja with various needs that are often very complex. This year marked a time where Umoja really stepped up in supporting parents who were battling mental health issues. Outreach support ensured that these families were strongly connected to their community while working closely with Ministry of Children and Family Development staff as parents attended Umoja programs and worked through other challenges, especially parenting. Outreach supported families in applying for housing, transition support, child care, community programs, food bank services, and receiving needed donations of clothing, household items and food.

### Volunteer Appreciation

Umoja hosted 29 volunteers and practicum students in 2015. Volunteers and students are an incredible support to the work that Umoja does and to the clients that benefit from our services. It is hard to put into words the appreciation and thankfulness that staff have for the dedication and support of volunteers, truly our work would not be possible without individuals who give their time without expecting anything in return. To all volunteers and students, we truly thank you.

## 1.2 YEARLY CLIENT STATISTICS

# of Children	136
# of Parents/Caregivers	149
# of Families	120
# of Attendees	4,086
# of Volunteers	29
# of Program Sessions	436
# of times clients received transportation	2,431

## 2. Demographics/Statistics

### A. Literacy and Life Skill:

CLIENT TYPE	Annual Total
# of <b>NEW</b> Clients	13
# of <b>PRIOR</b> Clients	27
<b>Total Client Caseload to Date</b>	40
# of Graduated clients	7
# of Attendees	1,490
# of Volunteers	12
# of times clients received transportation	26 (fieldtrip)
# of field trips/guest speakers	7

<p><b>Program Successes</b></p>	<p>The unit on earthquake and fire safety provided the backdrop for clients to share their personal survival stories of courage and trauma. One student shared how she survived a fire that destroyed her entire refugee camp, claiming the lives of many family and friends. We recognize the fragility of these moments in class but rather than avoid these conversations we know they have the potential to provide an opportunity for healing and support.</p> <p>Practicum students from BCIT were successful in completing a health history for each literacy student. This information will give us insight into the individual needs of each client and provide opportunities to further support our clients.</p> <p>Our annual Christmas party drew over 60 clients and was an opportunity for students to celebrate the season as well as hear of upcoming opportunities such as the post-secondary scholarship award for families with youth.</p>
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**B. Afterschool Program - HW Club, Saturday Program, Girls Group, Counselling**

CLIENT TYPE	Annual Total
# of <b>NEW</b> Clients	14
# of <b>PRIOR</b> Clients	39
<b>Total Client Caseload to Date</b>	53
# of Graduated/exited clients	22
# of Attendees	1,322
# of Volunteers	13
# of times clients received transportation	1,366

# of field trips/guest speakers	16
# of home visits	12

<b>Program Successes</b>	<p>The children who continued to come to the program showed great improvement. Their English spelling and reading comprehension has improved. This also helped their self-esteem which in turn supports developing social skills particularly in conflict resolution. The children were awarded special certificates on their last day of homework club as well as goodie bags to appreciate all their hard work.</p> <p>Through new funding from Variety, the children's charity. Umoja was able to hire a Children's Counsellor and begin developing a new program that offers children's counselling for kids ages 6-12 who have experienced war, conflict and/or migration. Extensive outreach and connecting with families was taken on in order to build trusting relationships and inform parents about the program and the importance of children participating then gaining parents support and involvement.</p>
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### C. Summer Camp

CLIENT TYPE	TOTAL
# of <b>NEW</b> Clients	25
<b>Total Client Caseload to Date</b>	56
# of Attendees	592
# of Volunteers	3
# of times clients received transportation	624
# of field trips/guest speakers	6

<p><b>Program Successes</b></p>	<p>Connections children made with one another and connections leaders made with children were very positive. Kids felt very comfortable in their environment and experienced many different activities, lessons and community places. This year camp was split into two, three week sessions in order to accommodate and accept increased numbers of children, allowing more participants to have a camp experience.</p> <p>Camp themes included: Community solidarity, fitness and healthy living, challenge week focusing on playing fair and teamwork</p> <p>Activities included: various games and activities, soccer tournament, 2 visits from the librarian, picnic, exercise video workout, obstacle course, trip to A Rocha, Water park, Nature walk, Culture show and tell and playland</p>
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**D. Outreach and Parenting**

CLIENT TYPE	Annual Total
# of <b>NEW</b> Clients	73
# of <b>PRIOR</b> Clients	31
<b>Total Client Caseload to Date</b>	103
# of Graduated/Exited clients	20
# of client contacts	682
# of Volunteers	1
# of times clients received transportation	415
# of field trips/guest speakers	3



<p><b>Program Successes</b></p>	<p>As a strategy, the outreach assesses concerns, listens, researches, and supports parents that are in distress such as immigration crisis, sickness, inappropriate billing, parenting difficulties, challenges with forms, settlement, trauma, donation support and connection and women fleeing from abusive relationships</p> <p>Outreach provided information, and connected families to ECD parenting programs, family resource programs in Guildford and Whalley, day-care/childcare, Libraries, recreation facilities, strong start programs within schools, ESL classes, additional health services, shopping centres, the food bank, Quest food exchange, employment programs and other community agency programs.</p> <p>Outreach continued to support families in applying for more affordable housing through BC Housing and has also contacted landlords on behalf of clients to support housing processes. In addition this year outreach has played an important role in supporting women as they learn more about their rights here in Canada to be empowered to seek further education and access other community supports.</p> <p>Success By 6 program focused on parenting skills in the Canadian context, such as children’s emotions, nutrition, self-care,</p> <p>Costco continued to provide a bi-weekly bread donation, foodbank provides weekly donation which are all distributed to clients</p>
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**E. Holiday Season Donations**

Holiday Season Donations	# of families
Bear Creek Elementary School	2
St. Matthews Church	30
Family to Family sponsorship	3
<b>TOTAL number of families receiving hampers</b>	35

**Umojas Funders:**



**United Way  
Lower Mainland**



**variety**  
the children's charity®

**Service  
Canada**



**Partners and Supporters:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options Community Services</li> <li>• Diversecity Community Resources Society</li> <li>• Surrey Food Bank</li> <li>• Surrey Libraries</li> <li>• City of Surrey</li> <li>• School District 36</li> <li>• A Rocha</li> <li>• British Columbia Institute of Technology</li> <li>• Trinity Western University</li> <li>• Discovery Community College</li> <li>• Surrey Fire Services</li> <li>• Canadian Diabetes Association</li> <li>• Simon Fraser University</li> <li>• Kwantlen Polytechnic University</li> <li>• Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surrey RCMP</li> <li>• Mosaic</li> <li>• Pacific Community Resources Society</li> <li>• Kerrisdale Annex</li> <li>• Costco – Newton Location</li> <li>• Fraser Health</li> <li>• Quest Food Exchange</li> <li>• Progressive Intercultural Community Services</li> <li>• YMCA Tong Louie</li> <li>• St. Matthews Church</li> <li>• People’s Church</li> <li>• African Canadian Soccer and Cultural Association</li> <li>• Individual donors and supporters</li> <li>• Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association</li> </ul>
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