

UMOJA NEWS

UMOJA NEWSLETTER FALL 2017 | MOVING FROM NEWCOMER TO NEIGHBOUR



In This Issue

United Way School's Out Umoja Program

UMOJA Scholarship Recipient 2017

Feels Like Home

Together in Solidarity

International Projects

Message From the Executive Director

After spending years as a Volunteer Executive Director I have officially retired from my work at Canada Post Corporation. This means I will be spending most of my retirement hours at Umoja helping support staff and volunteers as the ED. At my retirement party in September, Canada Post was strongly represented and all the people who came donated over \$2000 dollars, which will be used by Umoja to acquire necessary extra space to ensure as many clients as possible are served. Umoja will need to fundraise at least \$11K each year to be able to keep the extra space that is now accommodating the overflow of clients in the parenting, literacy and out of school programs. I would like to thank all those who donated towards my retirement for dedicating your donations towards helping new immigrants. Your donations are already having an impact and I hope you

will continue to support the work which Umoja has started. Every new comer who comes to our communities deserve immediate settlement and integration services as well as parenting skills in the Canadian context for those coming from refugee camps. It is organizations like Umoja that provides the starting point of a new life in a new country.

On behalf of Umoja's Board of Directors, let me thank the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Provincial Government and our local foundations and credit unions for standing with Umoja in providing the much needed funding. Without your help, many immigrants who remain in isolation would continue to struggle in silence, now there is hope. Thank you so much.

-Amos Kambere



Umoja Youth Scholarship Recipient: SAMANTHA



It is with great joy that Umoja, along with The Change Project are pleased to announce Samantha as this year's recipient of the Umoja Youth Scholarship Award!

Samantha came to Canada in 2010 with her family from Uganda, Africa. Samantha spent her first year in Canada attending Grade 7 and right away started participating in the Umoja Afterschool Program. When Samantha moved on to high school she continued to stay avidly involved with Umoja by volunteering for the homework club and Saturday program. Samantha has continued to excel in school and within her community where she actively seeks opportunities to get involved and volunteer when she can. Samantha has just started her first year of University attending KPU and taking sciences! It has truly been a wonderful opportunity to see Samantha start her journey in Canada and continue to work hard and persevere to reach her goals. All the best in your first year of University Samantha!

For more information about Umoja's youth scholarship award, please visit our website.

United Way School's Out Umoja Program

The United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) has been the driving force to ensuring that afterschool programming at Umoja consistently continues for newcomer immigrant and refugee children in the Surrey community. Since 2007 UWLM has been funding the program and it must be said that this program would have not been able to continue if it weren't for the constant, unwavering support of the UWLM. Over the years this program has engaged and impacted hundreds of children through homework and English language support, community connection, positive socio-emotional development and increased wellness. The impact that this program

has had for these children is truly invaluable. One mother whose children are currently attending the program says "Umoja has helped me meet a lot of people I could make a connection with and talk to from my own country, and also different countries. I never thought I could make those types of connections. Also my family has been helped with some resources and with food donations. My children have been able to learn English quicker and have the opportunity to play with new kids. We thought when we arrived here we would be alone but that wasn't the case because of the kids first joining summer camp last year." United Way dollars truly at work here.



Feels Like Home



Claudia came to Umoja two years ago with minimal English but a heart to learn and pursue her goals. Through much perseverance and determination, Claudia was able to graduate from the Umoja literacy and life skills program feeling confident in her ability to communicate in English and ready to continue pursuing her goals for herself and her family! She expresses her gratitude for the Umoja literacy program during her graduation speech saying, “as we gather here to celebrate and at the same time to end a learning experience at Umoja, I am pleased to tell my classmates, teachers and people at the office THANK YOU for the opportunity you have given me to come here to begin my new life experience in this new country called Canada. When I came to Umoja, I did not know what to do or what to say most of the time, I would just look at other people from different backgrounds, customs and culture but not communicate. It has not been easy to walk this rode without knowing the English language which we all have to use in order to communicate regardless our backgrounds or origin. I came to this country with a dream and a purpose, and now that I am about to start on a new journey in my life with my family and friends I have acquired a long the way I want to express my gratitude to all the people of Umoja and say to them one more time, THANK YOU” We are proud of you Claudia! All the best to you in the future!

TOGETHER in SOLIDARITY

It takes a tremendous amount of effort and support to make an organization like Umoja continue to operate. The efforts of each foundation, funder, business, partner organization and community member does not go unnoticed. No matter how big or how small a contribution may be, there is an impact being made, there is a legacy being left and a person’s life being changed for the better. For every person who has invested dollars, time, resources, donations and energy, we thank you. While Umoja is the vehicle in which programs run from, it is truly the efforts and initiatives of the community that ensure this vehicle continues to move,

press on, push forward and impact the lives of newcomer families as well as children internationally. There is power in unity, when people come together for a common purpose, reaching beyond themselves and positively impacting the lives of others, it certainly is a beautiful thing. So in our continued efforts to reach, support and empower newcomer families we ask that you also continue to give of your time, resources and talents. Continue to come alongside us in solidarity so that Umoja is adequately positioned to receive any family in need of support.

If you are interested in giving to Umoja please call our office.





International Projects | Rwentutu Community School

This year marked a strong way forward for Rwentutu Community School. Through the generous support of Luke 4 Foundation, Rwentutu was able to install new and more powerful solar panels on each building, a rain water harvesting system with underground water storage and a new computer lab with internet connectivity for staff and students. Sustainable power, water and connectivity ensures a better learning environment for the students of Rwentutu community. Since the inception of the school over 13 years ago, lack of reliable power and water has continued to increase challenges for

teachers and staff. Strong, reliable power means increased safety at night as well as better learning opportunities for children passed daylight hours. The new water system ensures staff and students have continued access to clean, safe drinking water and proper sanitation standards are kept at all times. We know that technology is the way of the future and the new computer lab will ensure that students are not left behind, learning basic computer skills. It is an exciting time for Rwentutu Community School!



Our Generous Donors:



Recognizing Community Partners:

Options Community Services

Diversecity Community Resources Society

Surrey Food Bank

Progressive Intercultural Community Services

City of Surrey

Quest Food Exchange

School District 36

Surrey Libraries

A Rocha

Costco

RCMP

Mosaic

Pacific Immigrant Resources Society

St. Matthew's Church

YMCA - Tong Louie

SFU-TD Community

Engagement Centre

Fraser Health Authority

Surrey Downtown BIA

Community Members

Broadway Church

St. Mark's Church