

Dear Friend,

Meghety spent the first nine years of her life in Canada isolated and alone.

But if you met Meghety today, all you would see is her wonderful smile. She would tell you how much she loves visiting her favourite place in the world, our very own Sunnydale Community Centre.

But it wasn't that long ago that Meghety could hardly get out of bed, she was so depressed. Each day was a struggle. "Every day, she stayed at home. She would stay in bed. She didn't want to do anything," said her mother, Zapour.

Meghety, now 29, lives with significant developmental challenges. While fluent in Arabic and Armenian, she is still learning English. This makes it hard to communicate and even harder to make friends.

But one day, Meghety discovered Sunnydale Community Centre and her life was transformed.

Nazmi, one of our incredible team members, saw Meghety's potential and signed her up as a volunteer. Ever since, Sunnydale has become Meghety's home away from home and a bright spot in her day.

Every day, families like Meghety's come through our doors because they have nowhere else to go. For some, it's about finding a place to belong and grow. For others, it's about receiving the basic support they need to survive. In each case, it's a lifeline.

And without your support today, there's a real chance that community members facing these struggles won't get the help they need when they need it.

Today, as I share Meghety's story with you, a deeply valued and committed House of Friendship supporter, I invite you to generously donate to help families like Meghety's have access to the care and compassion they so desperately need. Your gift today will help ensure that children and families always have a safe place to go when times get tough.



Meghety comes every Thursday morning to help hand out food to other families in the neighbourhood. She organizes the canned food that arrives early in the morning, breaks down boxes for recycling, and visits with other volunteers. When community members arrive, Meghety is there with her bright smile, greeting them and providing the food they need to get through the week.

Meghety takes pride in her volunteer work. She knows that she is making a difference.

She's also excited to be able to bring home food to her own family. She has found a purpose to her days, and nothing can keep her away.

"I love everything about Sunnydale. I like to help," said Meghety. "I love Marwa, Nazmi, Ola, and Maggie – they are all my friends here."

Since joining the team as a volunteer, Meghety has also enjoyed participating in other programs. She comes for the weekly Digital Technology program – and often helps others, as this is an area where she shines.

That, along with the sewing program and English conversation group, gives Meghety so many opportunities to be part of a community. She loves being part of Sunnydale because she can work on her independence, including walking by herself to the centre.

"Every day, she says she wants to come, to see her friends, and do her job," said Zapour. "She started coming here and began to take better care of herself. She has more confidence, and feels at home here."

That's the beauty of the work that you make possible through your generosity and compassion – people like Meghety, who need a little help, can also give back to others in their own community. It's the most wonderful way to pay kindness forward.

The resilience, strength, and skills of community members come together in a beautiful circle of support. They may be going through a difficult time, but they are doing it together supporting each other every step of the way.

As a cherished member of our House of Friendship community, you can make an immediate difference today and help build that crucial circle of support. Your kindness can bring hope and purpose to someone who needs it most.

The life that Meghety and her family live today is in stark contrast to the journey they endured to get here. Twelve years ago they fled war-torn Syria, hoping for a better life.



Meghety loves Nazmi, and her other friends at Sunnydale.

When they lived in Syria, Meghety attended a special needs school, and had many hobbies, including crochet and bowling, even competing on a Special Olympics team.

But when the war started, the peaceful life they once knew was gone forever.

“We lived in Syria for one year without electricity or heat,” said Zapour. “It was very cold in the winter. We only left our home when we had to. It wasn’t safe.”

The family fled to Lebanon, where they lived for a few years, waiting for permission to come to Canada, where relatives were waiting as sponsors.

“It was terrible there. The people in Lebanon hated people from Syria. But Meghety, she was happy – she made friends there. When we came to Canada, it was hard for her.

“She couldn’t find any way to be happy.”

There are so many other families like Meghety’s, leaving behind the world they once knew. They have to start over. But how can they begin again without help? Without hope?

These families are struggling to survive and need your support to create a safe place for them to land.

Isn't this heartbreaking?

And in today’s difficult economic climate, more people than ever are falling behind. Right now, a staggering one in eight households in Waterloo Region need help to feed their families.

For parents who want to give everything to their children, this everyday struggle is making them face impossible decisions. Do they pay rent, or feed their family? Do they keep the heat on in winter, or buy winter clothes for their children? Every day comes with so many hard decisions that they can’t see beyond the next challenge, the next obstacle.

You can help change these stories. That’s why I’m writing to you today.

Whether it is helping someone like Meghety find a place to belong, helping a child get the after-school tutoring they need to succeed, or providing a mother food to feed her family, your support is vital to help these resilient and resourceful families overcome almost insurmountable odds.

You are a valued, faithful member of our community, which is why I’m reaching out to you today to ask for your help. If you are able, please consider your most generous gift to support Meghety and others like her. Your donation today can help bridge the gap these families are facing.

Today, Meghety and her family are building their new life in Canada, but it hasn’t been easy.

“We all live together, one big family – my husband, my son and his family, Meghety, and my mother-in-law,” said Zapour. “My husband was working in a factory, but he was laid off six months ago and doesn’t have a job. I have a home daycare, but it’s hard.”

And a few years ago, Zapour was diagnosed with breast cancer. While she is in remission now, Zapour couldn’t help but worry about her daughter’s future.

“Who would take care of her if I was gone?” asked Zapour. “I worry about that a lot.”

But for now, knowing that Meghety has found a community at Sunnydale eases Zapour’s mind.

“When Meghety is happy, I am happy,” said Zapour. “I know she is okay.”

Your donation will provide a safe place for families like Meghety’s to land when they have nowhere else to go. Today, if you can, please consider your most generous gift for families and people in Waterloo Region, so they can gather the strength to begin again.

Thank you for your care and compassion, for walking alongside people like Meghety and Zapour, and for helping to build a community where everyone can belong and thrive.

With gratitude,



John Neufeld, CEO
House of Friendship

P.S. Your gift today will help children and families all over our region get a lifeline of support to overcome their challenges. **Thank you for your compassion and generosity – it means so much!**