

CHRISTMAS 2009

In this edition:

1. President's Message
2. How to read a Street Directory training
3. Volunteer opportunities with VoRTCS in 2010
4. Introducing our new Part time Tutor Coordinator
5. Do you have VoRTCS Library materials?
6. Christmas in the Land of OZ
7. Christmas around the world
8. Festive recipes from around the world
9. Festive recipes from our refugee families culture
10. Health and Play for Life Project snapshot
11. Refugee News—report from around the world



volunteer refugee tutoring & community support

President's message: Merry Christmas!



Hi all,

Welcome to the final edition of the VoRTCS newsletter for 2009!

As we prepare to round off another year for the VoRTCS program, we at the VoRTCS HQ continue to be amazed by the continued growth of the program and generosity of our wonderful army of volunteers. When the VoRTCS program kicked off in 2005 with just a handful of tutors, I think few would have imagined that it would grow to what it has become today: a large scale volunteering program assisting over 300 refugee families across the greater Brisbane region. It truly is a wonderful achievement and one that each of you as valued members of the VoRTCS team deserve to be proud of!

2009 caps off another year of growth and change for the VoRTCS team, with over 220 new tutors trained, allowing over 80 families from refugee backgrounds to commence in-home intensive English language tuition and community support.

For the VoRTCS management team, the focus of 2009 has been upon evaluation and improvement: taking a moment to stop, breath and reflect. Following the volunteer and stakeholder survey in July, we have set about planning and implementing numerous changes based on your feedback as to what works, and what we can do better. We have listened to your feedback, and are committed to working very hard to continue to build an even bigger and better VoRTCS program! As always, if you have any ideas or feedback to pass on, or you would like to be involved as a member of our management team or project volunteer, please get in touch - we would love to hear from you!

One of the key achievements for 2009 was the re-writing of the tutor induction training program and publication of the first VoRTCS Tutoring Handbook. Both of these milestones have been the result of many hours of tireless hard work by our wonderful Learning Development Team. The quality of this work was recently affirmed at a meeting of some of our sector partners who marvelled at the professionalism of the VoRTCS induction training and the material it covers. Big thanks to all involved!

Another exciting development in 2009 was the hosting of our first ever Logan based intake training for new VoRTCS tutors. As most of you are aware, the Logan area is a key area of need for the VoRTCS program with a growing number of families from this area seeking VoRTCS tutors. We are hoping to repeat this exercise in 2010 in order to increase our capacity to support these families. A big thank you must go out to the Woodridge State School for their generous loan of their school facilities for the training nights. We look forward to working with them again into the future.

So as we begin to enter into the silly season, I am conscious of the fact that many of you will be taking a small break from tutor as holidays and family commitments begin to mount up. On behalf of the whole VoRTCS team I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you for the generosity, commitment and support you have shown to the work of VoRTCS in 2009 - without you, the VoRTCS program simply would not be possible. I hope that you all enjoy the end of year break and come back renewed and revitalised for the work that awaits in 2010!

***Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday period!
With warm regards, Claire and the VoRTCS team***

> Contact us

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



If you are interested
in volunteering with
VoRTCS

contact the VoRTCS
team at:

[refugeetutoring@
refugeetutoring.org](mailto:refugeetutoring@refugeetutoring.org)

To submit an idea
for the newsletter

contact the Publica-
tions Officer at:

[publications@
refugeetutoring.org](mailto:publications@refugeetutoring.org)

WANTED!

Expressions of Interest for short term VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

St Vincent de Paul Ipswich Settlement Services (SISS) is a Special Works of the St Vincent de Paul Society, delivering settlement support to newly arrived humanitarian entrants living in the Ipswich region, covering an area that stretches from Darra to Ipswich City. A need has recently been identified among clients of the service for training in



'How to Read a Street Directory'.

Many people of refugee background, although they own and drive a vehicle, have never learned map reading skills.

They therefore have difficulty locating and accessing new services, unless shown the way by friends or case workers.

As a method of increasing independence, SISS would like to run a series of 2-3 workshops in February 2010 to teach people of refugee background how to read a street directory.

We are calling for expressions of interest from volunteers who would like to assist with this 'one off' course, by providing one on one support during the workshops. The sessions would take place in Goodna during business hours (so that mothers with young children can attend).

If you have any questions, or would like to express interest in taking part, please contact:

Natasha Blucher, Settlement Case Worker

Ph: (07) 3202 1180

Email: natasha.blucher@svdpqld.org.au

Volunteering Opportunities for our Tutors with VoRTCS in 2010

Now that the Xmas break is approaching perhaps you would like to think of using your tutoring experience to help us run VoRTCS or maybe you would like to be involved in other areas more than tutoring.

On our Committee for 2010—several existing Committee members will be retiring at the AGM on 1st of March and we will be looking for some new Committee members.

Also, in our Learning Team there will be opportunities for facilitator trainers. We have already build the team up from 2 to 4 and we are looking to reach at least 6 trainers for our 2010 training program. This is because our new format training has been very successful, and we are now planning to increase the number of intakes per year so that we can service more refugee families.

For more information on any of these two exciting opportunities please contact:

Ian on vicepresidenttu@refugeetutoring.org

OR Marion on learningdevelopment@refugeetutoring.org

> **Contact us**

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



Introducing our new part-time Tutoring Coordinator



Julie Abrahams has joined the VoRTCS team on a part time basis as our Tutoring Coordinator.

Julie has a long history with St Vincent de Paul Society, having worked with them since 1996. Julie started as a Secretary at the Sumner Park Depot before becoming Personal Assistant for the Brisbane Metropolitan Centers and then Accounts Payable Clerk.

Julie currently holds the position of Overseas Development Co-coordinator as well as VoRTCS part time Tutoring Coordinator.

We are very happy to welcome Julie on board!

Do you have VoRTCS Library materials? Please return them!

Over the summer period we will be cataloguing the library at VoRTCS thank you to our wonderful volunteers Anne Graham and Rosemary Haworth.

To ensure that this can happen, it would be great if all borrowed library material could be returned as soon as possible so they can be entered it into the data base over the summer break. You will be able to borrow them again if you still need them, after the cataloguing is completed.

To arrange a time to return your books,
Contact Aida on 3010 1069 or email us at
tutoring@refugeetutoring.org **before 16 December 2009.**



- VoRTCS is a non-profit, volunteer run program that provides free in-home tutoring for refugee families in the Brisbane area.
- VoRTCS is a special works of St Vincent de Paul.
- Tutors assist refugee-families with primary,secondary and tertiary school work, literacy,conversation practice and life skills
- Please refer to theVoRTCS website for further information:

www.refugeetutoring.org

> **Contact us**

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



Christmas in the Land of Oz

(from a refugee perspective)

by Aida Villatoro



I will never forget my first Christmas in Australia. My family and I (husband and three small children with a bag of belongings each) arrived in Brisbane on the 10 October 1991.

We knew nobody here but we felt so lucky and so grateful of being awarded a refugee visa in those horrific days of the Civil War in El Salvador.

Nobody can really understand the fear and the hopelessness related to those days unless they have lived something similar themselves. That fear for your own life and security made many people leave their family, friends and belongings behind so they could live in freedom and peace.

Our first Christmas in the Land of Oz was a mixture of sadness and hope, missing our loved ones, and trying to make new friends. Christmas was not always happy at home, it was full of memories from the past and many tears came from our eyes remembering our grandparents and some lost friends.

We also had a lot of crackers and many fireworks, but we also had horrific fires and people killed on Christmas Day.

People killed in the streets was something that you get used to seeing when you are in the middle of a Civil War. For those 30,000 people killed during those 12 years of war, there was no Christmas at all, and for the families of those 7,000 people missing during those years, there still no Christmas to date.

So Christmas could be a nice lunch or dinner, full of presents and surrounded by friends and relatives for those who can afford it. But for those in the refugee camps, Christmas is only a very sad time of the year, with no food, no presents, no friends, no relatives, and no hope.

Christmas in the Land of Oz could be a very nice time of the year but not for all. I can only imagine that the way I feel about Christmas is the same for other people who have made Australia their homes.

I am still crying on Christmas, here in the Land of Oz, because of my family and friends that live so far away, and I still listen to some Christmas chorus that my parents used to sing.

Christmas for me is a time to remember and to feel sad for those who have died or disappeared. It is a time to pray for those less fortunate.

It is a time to share with those in need. What we really need at Christmas time is to have good friends, good people who care and understand and who make you feel that you belong here, in the Land of Oz.



> Contact us

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



Christmas around the world

Christmas is a time of festivities and celebration. Here are just a few of the December festivities that occur around the world:

Hanukkah/Chanukkah (December 11th -19th -Jewish).

This is an 8-day festival celebrating the rededication of the Temple to the service of God.

Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe (December 12th -Mexican)

The Shrine of our Lady of Guadalupe is Mexico's most sacred religious site. Each day thousands of worshippers visit this holy place. December 12th is the anniversary of the day that Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian peasant saw the vision of the Virgin, who ordered him to go and tell the Bishop of Mexico to build a church on that spot.

Saint Lucia Day (December 13th -Swedish)

This Festival of Light takes place to celebrate the return of more hours of daylight to the dark Swedish winter.

New Year (December 15th - Khmu)

The whole Khmu community comes together to prepare food and drinks for a Baci (tray of spirit) Ceremony during the New Year.

Eid Al-Adha (December 18th -Islam)

This Festival of Sacrifice is a religious festival celebrated by Muslims and Druze world-wide as a commemoration of God's forgiveness of Ibrahim (Abraham) from his vow to sacrifice his son, as commanded by Allah.

Hmong New Year (December 26th - January 1st -Hmong)

The Hmong New Year celebration is a cultural tradition that takes place annually in Hmong communities. The celebration can last from 3 to 7 days, or even longer.

Christmas Season Celebrations in Australia

Christmas is an important time of year in Australia, as it is in many other countries. If you would like to share the tradition of Christmas day festivities in Australia with your refugee family, have a look at www.culture.gov.au This website contains a useful summary of the history of Christmas and some unique Australian traditions.

For example, in the weeks leading up to Christmas houses are decorated; greetings cards sent out; carols sung; Christmas trees installed in homes, schools and public places; and children delight in anticipating a visit from Santa Claus. On Christmas Day family and friends gather to exchange gifts and enjoy special Christmas food. Many Australians spend Christmas out of doors, going to the beach for the day, or heading to camping grounds for a longer break over the Christmas holiday period.



DON'T forget to let us

know if:

- You change your contact details
- You stop visiting your family (even temporarily)
- You need another tutor to assist your group
- You need more resources
- You need advice
- You are having problems tutoring
- Your family changes their contact details

> **Contact us**

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



Festive recipes from around the world



Universal Fruitcake

Ingredients

1 pack date bar mix
2/3 cup hot water
3 eggs
1/4 cup flour
3/4 tsp baking powder
2 tablespoons light molasses
1 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp allspice
1 cup chopped nuts
1 cup raisins
1 cup red/green candied cherries.

Procedure

Heat oven to 325 Fahrenheit. Grease & flour 9 x 5 x 3 loaf pan. Combine date bar mix and water until crumbly. Add eggs, flour, baking powder, molasses & spices. Fold in nuts & cherries; pour into pan. Bake 80 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.



Coconut Macaroons

Ingredients

250g desiccated coconut
250g sugar
1 teaspoon corn flour
5 egg whites
Grated rind of one lemon

Procedure

Wash the lemon, then grate the rind. Whisk egg whites till very stiff. Add sugar and whisk again till stiff. Then fold in coconut, corn flour and rind. Place in spoonfuls on a flour-dusted baking tray and cook in a slow oven for 20 minutes.



Drover's Plum Pudding from Australia

In the Australian bush in the 19th century people had to improvise. The Billy Can is a tin, with handles, usually used to carry water.

Ingredients

250 grms rice
Sweetened water
Sugar 125 g raisins or sultanas
A handful of nuts

Procedure

Put rice in saucepan of boiling, sweetened water and simmer until no water is left. Add remaining ingredients. Sweeten to taste.



Torte Vigilia Di Natale

Traditionally served on Christmas Eve in Italy.

Ingredients

1 cup water
1 cup sultanas
1/4 cup chopped walnuts
1/4 cup chopped almonds
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter/margarine
1 egg
2 teaspoons vanilla
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup sifted flour

Procedure

1. Mix together water, sultanas, walnuts and almonds in a saucepan and bring to boil. 2. Reduce heat simmer for 5 minutes. Cool. 3. Cream butter and sugar. 4. Add egg. Beat well. 5. Add vanilla. Add sifted flour and baking powder to creamed mixture. 6. Add fruit mixture. Blend Thoroughly. 7. Pour into well buttered 20cm square tin. 8. Bake at 180 degrees celcius for 30 minutes.



Kourabiethes

Greek shortbread recipe.

Ingredients

450g flour
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 tablespoon ouzo
450g unsalted butter
2 egg yolks
175g sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup ground almonds or walnuts
Icing sugar and cloves

Procedure

Sift flour with baking powder twice. Cream butter and sugar, add ouzo, vanilla and egg yolks, nuts, and cinnamon. Blend in flour to make soft but firm dough. If not enough liquid, add another egg yolk. Break off small pieces, pat into biscuit shape, place on floured baking tray. Insert a clove in each biscuit and bake at 180 degrees Celsius for 20 mins. (cooked but not brown). While still hot, sprinkle biscuits with icing sugar. Each shortbread should be stuck with one clove to represent the three wise men who brought spices to the Christ child.

> Contact us

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



Recipes from our refugee families

Crema Caramela - Sudanese Caramel Custard.

Ingredients

- 8 eggs
- 1 quart milk
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 ounce melted butter, plus extra
- melted butter, for greasing
- 1 tablespoon banana extract or vanilla extract
- 1 cup maraschino cherry (or glace)

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F.

In a 2 quart bowl, beat the eggs, milk & 1/2 the sugar until mixture is frothy. Add the butter & banana / vanilla extract & mix again, then set aside.

Melt the remaining 1/2 cup of sugar - place in a small pan & cook on med-high heat until it has melted & has reached the caramel stage.

Pour the caramel into a 1 1/2 quart star shaped aluminium pan. Rotate the pan to spread caramel all around the sides.

Beat the egg mixture again & pour it quickly into the cake pan.

Cover the top of the pan with aluminum foil which has been well buttered on the under side.

Place the pan in a larger pan half filled with water (as you would do a custard).

Bake at 350 F for 30 minutes.

Remove cover and test with metal skewer - if it comes out clean the custard is done.

Allow to cool then place in the refrigerator for approximately 4 hours .

Turn the caramella out onto a 10-12" platter.



Burmese Coconut Rice

Ingredients

- 3 3/4 cup coconut milk
- 1 lb freshly grated coconut
- 3 1/2 cups long grain rice
- 3 medium onions, grated
- 3 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cups coconut milk

Directions

In a saucepan, boil milk. Add grated coconut. Stir and remove from heat. Cover and let it stand for 1 hour. In a wok, heat oil. Add rice and onions. Fry for 3 minutes. Place the saucepan containing the milk and grated coconut over medium heat. Add rice, onions and salt. Mix, stir well and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cover the saucepan. Let it simmer over low heat for 30 minutes or until the rice has absorbed the liquid. Add extra coconut milk if the mixture becomes too dry before the rice is soft.



Try these two yummy recipes from Sudan and Burma as an introduction to our project:

“Health and Play for Life”

***that VoRTCS will be running next year thanks to the
BCC ‘Eat Well and Be Active’ Community Partnerships Program.
This is an exciting initiative that will need the support of all our tutors
by collecting recipes from their families.***

We will send more information in our first Newsletter Edition in 2010.

> Contact us

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org



Refugee-news: reports from around the world

UNHCR Reports on how we are helping refugees around the world

<http://news.supportunhcr.org/>

African Union adopts major convention to protect and assist the internally displaced

In late October, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres joined a number of African leaders in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, for a four-day summit to participate in the adoption of a landmark convention that will provide assistance and protection to Africa's internally displaced people. The new African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa is the first legal instrument of its kind in the world.

The continent of Africa has the world's largest population of internally displaced people and this seminal convention is a great achievement in helping to ensure their protection.

UNHCR chief António Guterres told a closing press conference that "this convention serves as a reminder that the responsibility to protect its own citizens is first and foremost an individual state responsibility and that where the state fails to do so, there is a collective African responsibility to act."



UNHCR prepares for possible floods in the Dadaab refugee camps

The world's largest refugee settlement, Dadaab, houses close to 300,000 mainly Somali refugees. Originally designed for 90,000, the three-camp settlement is extremely overcrowded and the prospect of flooding raises great concern for the well-being of residents. Heavy flooding could lead to the destruction of shelters and the outbreak of disease because of overflowing latrines. You can help the people of Dadaab during these difficult times by donating to the UNHCR Star Appeal



Norwegian bikes to South Africa for 2010 World Cup to raise awareness for refugees

In late October, UNHCR staff in Geneva received an extraordinary visitor; a Norwegian named Bjorn Heidenstrom who was 129 days into a cycling trip to South Africa for the 2010 World Cup to raise awareness for refugees. His plan is relatively simple: cycle through Europe, the Middle East, and then Africa to collect football shirts from fans and players and turn them into the world's largest football shirt at the 2010 World Cup -- a symbol of solidarity from the international football family to the world's refugees.



See for yourself: The people we help

The UN refugee agency was set up in 1950 with a three-year mandate. Almost 60 years later, it is still in existence and helping millions of people around the world. These are the people we help.



UNHCR distributes tents to displaced families in Pakistan

Tens of thousands of civilians have fled their homes in South Waziristan following the extension of the Pakistan government's military campaign against Taliban militants. With winter underway, it is imperative UNHCR provide insulated tents to the newly displaced in the area as well as replace lighter tents given to those displaced by fighting in the Swat Valley further north in the spring of 2009.

> Contact us

- VoRTCS, c/-St Vincent de Paul, PO Box 3351, South Brisbane, 4101
- Email: info@refugeetutoring.org • Web: www.refugeetutoring.org

