



# The Ellen Street Shout

Winter 2012



## New Home, New Beginning



*IRCOM 2 coming along slowly but surely, getting a total facelift that will brighten the landscape in Centennial*

While the new site for IRCOM 2 has remained quiet since the announcement by Premier Greg Selinger, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews, and Housing and Community Development Minister Kerri Irvine-Ross in fall 2010, the board rooms at Manitoba Housing and Synshyn Architecture and Interior Design (SAID) certainly haven't.

Plans for IRCOM 2 have finally begun to heat up as talks and safety audits from the last 12 months have started to culminate into concrete plans and designs. The most exciting development; IRCOM 2 will be getting a whole new building envelope made out of white and charcoal coloured stone. This new exterior designed by SAID will dramatically change the way the building looks and make it a landmark in the neighbourhood. Other important developments; IRCOM 2 will be getting brand new elevators, a basketball court and completely new windows. The most exciting development for IRCOM's Director of Housing, Garry

Neufeld, who has been managing the project from the start – there will be a small library in the building complete with a small fireplace.

The original budget for the project was approximately \$11 million dollars but with the required exterior changes, as well new elevators, the project's budget may increase by another \$1.2 million dollars. Gratefully these extra expenses will be covered by Manitoba Housing.

**Your first look at IRCOM 2!**

No firm date is set yet but it is expected that actual construction will begin in April once the tender has gone to bid. It is our hope that families will be able to move into the building in the spring of 2013. IRCOM 2 will operate in sync with IRCOM 1 and all policies and programming will remain the same.

Interested in the project? Interested in forming a partnership or just sharing your knowledge with IRCOM? IRCOM will be having a community consultation in the coming months. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information or to be put on the consultation reminder list please contact Garry Neufeld at 943-8765, extension 28 or at [garryn@ircom.ca](mailto:garryn@ircom.ca).



# Newcomer gives back to community

*From interpreting to job search workshops, newcomer shares his skills with community and inspires us all to give more of ourselves*

By Vanessa Kornelsen

Volunteers in Action



When it comes to volunteering, Amber Dahal knows what is at stake. Since coming to IRCOM, Amber has been actively involved in giving back to his community in everything from helping the house manager with caretaking to interpreting for his community to assisting with job search workshops.

"I really appreciate what IRCOM offers to my family," says Amber. "They send language partners to help us learn English, help us learn about the community, give programs for the children. I want to volunteer to help repay IRCOM."

Amber had the opportunity to participate in a six week job search workshop in the spring, run by IRCOM staff member Manuel Zuniga. During the workshop, participants learned how to write resumés and cover letters. Having participated in that workshop, Amber is now helping fellow volunteer Tika Adhikari run a similar workshop for the Bhutanese community. "Now that I have learned the skills, I want to help my friends," says Amber. "I enjoy helping my community. I want to solve problems for those in critical situations."

Back home, Amber received training in counseling which he put to use for 14–15 years, working with youth ages 12–18. He describes what he did as "correcting problems by showing a different example."

"Here in Canada, if you concentrate and work hard you can do really well." Amber says he likes working with youth because they are the right age to make positive life choices. If their heart and mind are in the right place, they will do well. "It is a critical age."

Amber hopes to start volunteering in IRCOM's after school program (ASP) sometime in the near future to continue his work with youth. He had planned to begin earlier, but thanks to the job search workshop he instead found himself employed, and has no time for ASP at present along with his existing volunteer work. For now, his wife and two children are taking priority.

Amber is also attending school full time. "I want to learn English to be able to help others." While living in Nepal, Amber completed two years of post-secondary education in the field of sociology. His goal now is first to get independent, and maybe later on he will go back to school to complete his degree.

"Volunteering gives you good credit," explains Amber when asked if he would encourage others to donate their time. "It is a great way to create networks, and my understanding is that in Winnipeg, we *must* start with volunteering. It is the first step to gaining employment." Other advantages to volunteering are that it looks good on a resumé, and you make a lot of friends.



## WHO ARE YOU?

### Tell me about yourself.

My name is Muluken Tegegne. I'm a 3rd year student at the University of Winnipeg, taking business. I came to Canada in 2002 from Khartoum, Sudan, and I didn't know any English. I was wearing sandals when I got off the plane, and it was freezing. All my shoes were in my bag, and I thought, "How do people live like this?" So that was my first day in Canada.

### How do you like winter now?

I still don't. It's so cold! Back home, it's 40 degrees and sunny every day.

### What's your role here at IRCOM?

I'm an education and support worker. I plan a variety of programs for the kids, taking them out to different activities. I also plan the soccer and basketball programs, organizing whatever they need, like gym time. In addition, I plan the homework club with Allyson. Every month I plan the homework rewards. Last month we went to the U-Putz golf course, and we had pizza and drinks. I also plan the Friday night boys' night.

### Tell me something that's your favourite.

Soccer is my most favourite thing. I played for the Ethiopian team in the African league this summer. I play striker, and I scored in every game I played. I got the most goals in the league, which was 7 or 8.

### Is there anything else you want the IRCOM community to know about you?

I lived here at IRCOM for three years and used to come to the program when Abdi ran it. I volunteered here before Abdi hired me. It's amazing working with the IRCOM team, they're always around when you need help, and that's what makes it great!

# KNOWING THE PEOPLE

By Vanessa Kornelsen

Want to get involved?

IRCOM's Family-to-Family Program matches newcomer families with Canadian families for fun and friendship from June to August each year.

Volunteer families are welcome to apply year-round to ensure their space in the program.

To apply for the 2012 program call 943-8765, extension 23 or email IRCOM's volunteer coordinator at [erina@ircom.ca](mailto:erina@ircom.ca).

**It's not enough to have a living space. It's not enough to go to school, or know where to find things at the local grocery store. It's not even enough to learn the language. In order to feel a real sense of belonging, you need to know the *people*.**

That's the agenda behind IRCOM's family-to-family program. Running during the summer months, the program helps IRCOM families make friends with other families from the wider Winnipeg community by pairing them up for fun activities. The program is largely self-directed as family pairs set their own meeting times and choose their own activities. One participant described the program as an "organic opportunity to learn about other places in the world."

This year's program involved twenty families. Ten families came from IRCOM, and ten from the wider

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community. Though some families later claimed they were nervous about meeting their partner family, the atmosphere at the kick-off party was festive and anticipatory. This fun feeling lasted throughout the program, culminating in an afternoon wrap-up at Lower Fort Garry.

Though the program has now ended, the friendships that were formed have not. Several family pairs have vowed to remain in contact beyond the borders of IRCOM's official involvement. One family pair has even set up a childcare system between them, as they discovered their children attend the same school. Now, every morning and for a short time after school, the Canadian child goes over to visit his IRCOM partner family.

These are the experiences that make a place feel like home. IRCOM works hard to provide its community members with opportunities like the family-to-family program in the hopes that newcomers can transition smoothly and completely into Winnipeg life and culture.



IRCOM is pleased to announce that one of our own, **Faiza Hargaaya**, was chosen as one of *The Uniter 30* this year! Read below for an excerpt from the story featuring 30 Manitobans who are 30 years old or younger who are making a difference and impacting their community in some way.



## The Uniter 30

By Amy Groening

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Since 2009, Faiza Juhar Weday Hargaaya has been involved with African Communities of Manitoba Inc. as a teacher's assistant and youth programs co-ordinator, while also performing at Folklorama and pursuing her spoken word poetry.

Originally from Oromia, Ethiopia, Hargaaya arrived in Canada in 1989. During a visit to Oromia after high school, Hargaaya was inspired to become a humanitarian. "I loved the culture and the community, but I couldn't turn my eye to the poverty, especially the poverty surrounding children in the area," says Hargaaya, 25.

Hargaaya received an international development studies degree at the

University of Winnipeg, and returned to Oromia for a six-month term with Khulafa Al-Rashidin Orphanage Aid and Development (KAROAD).

Hargaaya works as the assistant co-ordinator for the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba's (IRCOM) After School Program, and is an IRCOM Ambassador. Hargaaya says IRCOM Ambassadors work to change negative perceptions about newcomers by sharing their own experiences.

"All the information (about newcomers) people get is from the media and the news, and what's on the news isn't success stories," Hargaaya says.

Hargaaya has also shared her spoken word poetry at the Canadian Muslim Leadership Institute and World Refugee Day, among other events.

Hargaaya's poetry tackles issues affecting Canadian newcomers.

*Refugee*, a poem Hargaaya performed on the CBC, describes how introducing someone as a refugee tells a painful story without permission of the subject.

"Refugee - it means you were driven from your country. It wasn't by a choice, there's a lot of pain attached to it," she says.



Ellie is feeling a little like she's caught in a whirlwind these days with all the changes going on! Staff had been getting to know each other really well as office renovations squished them all into new - and smaller! - spaces. The new office renovations were worth it though, while the lime green walls raised some eyebrows at first they are now quite loved. What a great way to start the new year! Ellie is happy to welcome back **Noelle DePape** as the new director of training and development. The after school program is growing, with new staff members **Solomon Seletene** and **Fatuma Sufi** joining the team as program support workers and **Allyson Fedak** taking on the role of teacher / school liaison with the new homework program in the fall. Along with all the new faces, Ellie also said a sad goodbye to **Habtamu Wedajo** who headed off to a new job with The Family Centre of Winnipeg. Luckily he's already been back to visit a dozen times so she's not missing him too much yet.



### Old but important news...

On Sunday, June 26, 2011 Othello Wesele was presented with the IRCOM Mosaic Merit Award (IMMA) by Rod Bruinooge, Conservative MP for Winnipeg South. The third recipient of the IMMA, Othello was selected because of his extensive volunteer work with Welcome Place, Central Park Revival, Central Market for Global Families, the African Youth

Educational Awareness Network of Winnipeg and the All Liberian Association of Manitoba. The IMMA recognizes the contributions made by immigrant and refugees in the areas of education, empowerment and community development. Congratulations Othello!

### The Plug *Help us welcome new Canadians*



#### EXPERIENCE PAINLESS GIVING:

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