

Council District One

Community Update

AUG

2000

Photo by Busath Photography



Council Member
Carlton Christensen

Nearly one year ago, my wife, Cathy and I had our second child join our family. After an eight-year wait, we looked forward to this new

daughter, named Sarah. One of the biggest surprises to me over the next few months was to come to the realization that Sarah was not her sister, Jessica. In those eight years, we had become very accustomed to Jessica, her behavior, likes-dislikes and somehow in my mind I figured Sarah would be exactly the same. Over the last few months as I have learned to understand Sarah, I have grown to love and appreciate her for who she is and appreciate the differences between her and Jessica.

Our neighborhoods can be very similar. While we are use to our old neighbors and have come to know what to expect from them, it becomes quite a contrast when someone else moves in and their behavior or actions change from those we are use to experiencing. Some will be better, and some may be worse. However, as we understand them, we may find some pleasant surprises. This edition will focus on those who have come to our neighborhoods as refugees from other countries. They bring with them special challenges, but with great potential of making our neighborhoods even better.

Our neighborhoods work when we work together to resolve issues. Please join me in doing so, and feel free to let me know ways that you see we can improve. Thanks.

Our Refugee Neighbors

Margaret Duku is a vivacious, educated woman. She and her husband, Paul Kito, knew they had to leave their homeland when the army in Sudan began inducting women and 10-11 year old children to fight the war in their homeland.



Edward (15), Margaret, Emmanuel (13), and Deana (11) in front of their home. Mary (19) and Emma (16) were not available for the photo.

They would not risk losing their children so six months ago they entered the United States and made Utah their home.

Margaret is one of the fortunate refugees who speaks excellent English. She was a schoolteacher in Sudan and is hoping to certify as a teacher here as well. Margaret and Paul's five children are all enrolled in school and are doing very well. She believes the most difficult aspect for all new refugees, however, is the language. The children are placed in classes according to age, regardless of whether or not they know any English. Some begin school not knowing even the alphabet. The adjustment is very difficult for many of the women due to the cultural difference of

little or no outside work experience or job skills coupled with the complication of speaking a new language.

The visit with Margaret was arranged through the International Rescue Committee (IRC), serving hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people in the United States as well as internationally. Jane Oliver is from Sudan and works for the IRC. Jane has been in this country for five years, three years in California and two years in Utah. She is a single mother with four children. Her husband was taken away to fight in Sudan eight years ago and has not been heard from since. Jane has been helping Margaret and her family to settle in Salt Lake City. Margaret and Jane have organized a Sudanese women's group to meet and discuss their progress and problems, practice their English, and enjoy some of their favorite activities such as crocheting and sewing.



Jane Oliver and Margaret Duku

Jelena Pasalic works for the IRC and came to the United States from Bosnia. Jelena has recently been assisting the Rujevic family, forced to leave war-torn Bosnia six and a half years ago. The Rujevic's lived in Germany until about six weeks ago when they arrived in the United States. Their stay in Germany was temporary and they reported being told they must return to Bosnia or go to some other country. Although most of their family, including brothers and sisters, are still in Bosnia, they wanted something better for their children. They chose not to return to their homeland.



Zlatija, Orhan (6), Lejla (10), Muharem, Sanela (3)

The father, Maharem, and the mother, Zlatija, are both attending classes to learn English. They have three beautiful children. Maharem is looking for work in construction or as a general laborer. Zlatija is a certified nurse in Bosnia and Germany and is hoping to certify here as quickly as possible. They are a delightful couple and their hospitality was overwhelming! They appreciate the

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kindness shown to them by their neighbors and the patience people have with the language barrier. They are eager to find employment and meet new friends.

District 1 resident, Mahmoud Issa, who is originally from Jordan, works at the University of Utah in the Cytogenetics Lab at the School of Medicine in Pediatrics. He is also a member of the Multi-Ethnic Advisory Committee, but spends much of his personal time helping refugee families. Mahmoud said language is the number one obstacle facing new refugees, but a close second, and one that often is overlooked, is the mental stability of new refugees. Many of the refugees are leave war torn areas where they have seen family members tortured and killed. The sound of a plane or the sight of a police officer will send them running because of what these entities represented in their previous countries. Although many of them need psychiatric assistance to get through these nightmares, others just need good friends who will help them assimilate into the culture.

Mahmoud is working on a program where early notification will be given to him and other volunteers when refugee families arrive in Utah. At that point these volunteers can have paperwork completed for the children at schools and make sure interpreters are available for them when they arrive at the school. This will help them in learning even the basics, such as a teacher's name, where the office is, where the restrooms are located, and the layout of the school. Other common problems with integrating children into the schools include teaching them about basic hygiene, proper dress, discipline, and attendance. Mahmoud said the schools are often challenged in the care for and teaching of these children because they are not trained to observe the types of problems these children have faced. Many suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There are often no programs in place to help teachers deal with the new problems they are now faced with in teaching children from all over the world.

The plight of refugees is not new to this country, but it is becoming more noticeable due to the large numbers of refugees we now have living in our neighborhoods. The IRC is one of several organizations helping these refugees when they arrive in this country. Their mission, as a nonsectarian, voluntary organization, is to "provide relief, protection and resettlement services for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict." If you would like to help in this effort, please call the IRC at 328-1091.

If you have refugee neighbors, get to know them. Language barriers and other differences quickly disappear when you see their smiling faces. They need friends who can assure them that they are a part of the community. Make them feel welcome – you will surely find you have more in common than you could ever realize.

EMAIL USERS - WE "STILL" WANT YOU!

- If you want timely notice of the latest and greatest updates
- occurring in the City and in District One, send us your email
- address and we'll add you to our growing D1 Update email list.
- Please fill out the form on the District One web page at
- <http://www.ci.sl.c.ut.us/council/district1.htm>.

POSITIVE CHANGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP PROGRAM

This year's Neighborhood Clean-up appears to have been very successful – thanks to some new changes made to the program.

Survey results from residents prior to the changes being made last year were very positive. Residents were eager for program modifications that would make the yearly Neighhborhood Clean-Up even more successful. Evidently it worked because residents are now voicing their satisfaction.

Some of the major changes included: not picking up any concrete or construction material, restricting the length of wood to eight feet, no hazardous waste or paint (already in the program from past years but reinforced again), and advising residents that they were only allowed one truck load of garbage in front of their home.

Craig Posselli, Division Manager for Streets and Sanitation, also stated that his staff has been canvassing areas prior to garbage pickup advising residents if there is a problem before the trucks arrive. "This has also helped educate the public to the changes and eliminated problems when crews arrive." Mr. Posselli also stated that the changes have helped decrease the amount of illegal dumping that has plagued the City in past years. If you have suggestions or comments about this years neighborhood cleanup, please call 535-6970 or email david.benson@ci.sl.c.ut.us

ADOPT A PARK!

Residents can now "adopt" a section of the Jordan River Parkway!

The Utah State Parks is now allowing individuals and groups to "adopt" a portion of a park, such as a trail or group area and help in the maintenance of the facility. This has worked very well for Eagle projects, people working off community service, neighborhoods groups, and families. It's a great volunteer opportunity.

The State Parks Division draws up a written agreement with the individual or group stating what section they are maintaining. This outlines the responsibilities of the "adopting" party and the State Parks Division. A long-term commitment of at least one year is preferred. A sign will be erected to provide recognition for the adopting sgroup/individual efforts.

Volunteers are always being sought to help with single day projects as well. Volunteers planted a number of trees between 700 North and 1000 North. They hsave also assisted with trash pick up along the trail. Volunteers from the Utah Arts Festival planted trees by the Health Department Building as well. Volunteers are vital in keeping this park alive and pleasant for families to enjoy.

If you would like to "adopt" a portion of the Jordan River Parkway, or volunteer for a single project, call Bruce Strom with Utah State Parks and Recreation at 533-4496 or email him at nrdpr.bstrom@state.ut.us. He'll be glad to help!

