



Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

UnitingCare NSW.ACT

Newsletter
August 2006

Honorary Chairperson:
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Dear Friends,

Firstly, I would like to thank all those donors, supporters and volunteers who came to the rescue of Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation (BASF) during the period I was in hospital, recuperating and moving to my new abode in Five Dock. Without your assistance, financial and otherwise, BASF would be in a desperate plight.

In May, the Management Committee decided that it might not be possible to provide ongoing supplementary financial assistance to the asylum seekers we currently support or to take on any new recipients because of BASF's parlous position. I am now pleased to report that we should have sufficient funds until Christmas. However, we always live hand-to-mouth.

Secondly, I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee who held the fort. Their constant monitoring of the financial situation, undertaking banking, preparing receipts and attending meetings made it possible for the Foundation to continue in my absence.

We are very lucky to have the ongoing support of the City of Sydney and Leichhardt Council, who were joined

recently by Marrickville, Hornsby, Canterbury, Willoughby, and Fairfield Councils, to provide the financial assistance that enables Balmain for Refugees to employ Kate Maclurcan (the part-time Asylum Seeker Project Co-ordinator) to raise the profile of BASF and to raise funds. Kate also acts as a contact person for pro bono legal people, psychiatrists, dentists, counsellors and those people who can assist asylum seekers living in our community.

More support from local clubs

Recently, BASF sent applications to the various Community Development Support Expenditure schemes (CDSE) in local council areas. The CDSE schemes distribute funds raised by clubs from their poker tax receipts to charity organisations. Canterbury Bulldogs has provided \$8000 and Club Five Dock has provided \$4000. Earlwood-Bardwell Park RSL Club and Burwood RSL Club have provided \$3000 each and Balmain Tigers Club has provided \$2000, bringing the total so far this year to \$20,000. The Management Committee is very grateful for this support from these Clubs.

Virginia Walker

Honorary Chairperson.

Who are we helping now?

Currently, BASF is helping approximately 100 asylum seekers, including people from Aceh, Burma, South America, Africa, the Indian sub-continent, Vietnam, China, and the Middle East. Some of these refugees are awaiting court decisions. Others

are waiting for the Minister for Immigration to approve their applications for humanitarian visas.

The number of asylum seekers we help changes from week to week as people are provided with visas or gain work rights, and as new people apply to us for assistance.

Dates for your diary

Fundraising lunches:

- 13 September in Glebe.
- 17 October in Mosman.

See overleaf for details

Walk for Change

12 November 2006, 8am-12 noon.

Walk, run or cycle the Bay Run (7km) for BASF.

- Drinks and food for all walkers from 8am - 1pm.
- Minimum \$10 sponsorship requested to register.

This event is sponsored by Port Jackson Greens. Nominate who you wish to walk for: BASF, Port Jackson Greens, or both. To register call Susan on 95551213 or 0418226231

Walk12Nov@gmail.com.

Refugee Conference:

31 March - 1 April 2007
Manning Clark House, ACT,
with Julian Burnside QC.

Donated Goods

Donated Goods at 38a Helen Street Sefton (off Hector Street), on the way to Villawood Immigration and Detention Centre, operates a pool of donated household goods, clothing, toys and books which can be given to asylum seekers and refugees in need. Donated Goods are open from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Wednesday. If you have items you think would be useful, please contact them on 9645 4300 prior to taking goods to them.

We urgently need dentists, doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers to do pro bono work and research cases. We also need friends to help in our fundraising efforts by selling raffle tickets or to help at community fairs.

Employment help for asylum seekers with work rights

Some of the asylum seekers living in our community are being given work rights for three months while their cases are being finalised. The short period of the work rights makes their future job prospects somewhat limited.

Many prospective employers are loath to train a new employee if they are unsure that the employee will be able to continue work or if his/her work rights will be removed after the three months' visa period ceases. Although most asylum seekers on an initial three months work rights visas have had their work rights continued after that initial three months, the exist-

tence of this condition adds yet another hurdle to finding a willing employer.

Another problem asylum seekers face is that they are not entitled to Centrelink assistance in finding work.

In addition to the financial benefits, it is a huge boost to the morale of asylum seekers when they have work to do. It is also very beneficial to BASF when they begin to receive payment for work, because we can then transfer the funds we pay them to another needy individual or family.

Among the asylum seekers who require assistance are men and women who have a variety of skills. There are people with up-

to-date information technology skills, cleaners, baby sitters, cooks and people who are willing to undertake gardening or to work as labourers or fruit pickers. All have good references as they are well known to members of the Management Committee, or to staff at the Asylum Seekers Centre and the House of Welcome.

If you are interested in assisting any of these people who are in need of employment and have valid visas, please contact us by email providing details of the nature of employment you might be able to offer and the location. If you are in the greater west area of Sydney, you can also contact the House of Welcome on 9727 9290.

Future fundraising

On Wednesday, 13 September we are holding a fundraising lunch at Italian restaurant **Osteria dei Poeti** at 73 Glebe Point Road Glebe. The lunch will commence at 12.00 noon with **John Newton** (well-known food writer) speaking, then acoustic vocal trio, **Touchwood** will perform songs from their latest album. One of the asylum seekers we support will also dis-

cuss his need for BASF's assistance. Free parking is available for three hours just around the corner at the Broadway Shopping Centre.

The cost is \$60, including wine and soft drinks. For bookings, contact Kate Maclurcan by phone on 9810 5826 or fax on 9555 9193; or Susan Meyer by phone on 9555 1213 or 0418 226 231. Please forward cheques or credit

card details to PO Box 829, Five Dock NSW 2046. All proceeds will go to BASF for our work with asylum seekers on BVEs.

On Tuesday, 17 October, **Maxine McKew**, well-known broadcaster and ABC host, will be speaking at our fundraising lunch at the Mosman Art Gallery. For more details please contact Kate Maclurcan or Susan Meyer at the above phone numbers.

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(02) 9810 5826

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I would like to help the Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation provide direct support for Visa "E" and special category refugees and lobby for their better treatment. Please send me:

- () more information about Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation
- () information about direct bank or credit card debits for regular donations

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone Email

Herewith by cheque/credit card - Visa/Mastercard/Bankcard \$

Card number Exp date

Signature

DONATIONS of \$2 or more to Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation are fully TAX DEDUCTIBLE