

'PLOPPED ALONE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY IS A TOUGH GO': SPONSORSHIP GROUP

Continued from front

camp after another and stumbling into a private refugee sponsorship program set up to assist Syrian refugees.

His fight-or-flight journey started in the late 1980s when Daye watched as his father, a local politician in Liberia, was tortured and killed at the start of a civil war that lasted more than a decade. From there, he made his way to the Ivory Coast.

"We hid during the day and made our way through the jungle at night," he said. "We had to find our way by moonlight. We lived in fear, but we were alive."

In 2010, his village was attacked in the night. That was the last time he saw his wife and children.

He spent the next several years living in tents, shuffled between refugee camps as civil wars in Liberia and the Ivory Coast raged on.

"There were thousands using one wash-room. We used palm leaves as a roof. We had to share a piece (of) bread," he said. "They beat on us. Everyone was brutalized. As we speak, it is still going on."

At the same time, the GEG group was to be part of Operation Syrian Refugees, which welcomed more than 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada in 2016.

"So many people were helping Syrian refugees, there was a gap," said GEG co-ordinator Mary Baxter.

"We were asked to help someone in more desperate need from somewhere else."

About a year later, GEG members welcomed Daye into his new home.

"Plopped alone in a foreign country is a tough go," Baxter said. "We're just trying to provide a softer landing, a friendly face, someone to call."

The group was responsible for supporting Daye for up to a year and ensuring he was able to support himself thereafter with housing, schooling, finding a job and all the logistics in between.

Daye was also given a smartphone — the key to reuniting with his family.

"I knew one day we would meet again," he said. "It is better to be alive and to have hope."

Through a fellow refugee camp survivor, Daye found his wife and children hiding in a village in the Ivory Coast.

"Just hearing her voice brings tears of joy to my eyes," he said. Now, the pair talk or leave voice messages at least once a week. "I know the pace and tone of her voice."

The private sponsorship program has a history of outperforming other refugee immigration streams, said Alex Hauschildt,



GEG Welcome Refugee photo

Jefferson Daye is welcomed by members of the Georgina East Gwillimbury Welcome Refugee (GEG) group upon arriving from a refugee camp in Liberia.

operations director with the Anglican United Refugee Alliance, an umbrella organization that facilitates private community-led refugee sponsorships.

"This is due to sponsors sharing their Canadian experience and personal resources in order to help refugee newcomers navigate life in their new home," he said.

Of the 151,000 refugees welcomed into Canada between 2015 and 2019, just over half were privately sponsored through community groups.

Years after the start of his new life in Canada, Daye is working with the GEG once more, this time to sponsor his wife and child.

The process is different and more complicated this time, said Baxter, with COVID-19 safety protocols and secure plans for quarantining when his family arrives.

"They won't be welcomed with open arms and a potluck," she said. "Instead, they will have to go into isolation."

The group is waiting for documents from Daye's wife and the final go-ahead from the federal government. In the meantime, the GEG is ramping up fundraising efforts, looking for short-term isolation housing, furnishings and community volunteers to help support Daye's family upon arrival.

For more information, visit GEG Refugee Welcome on Facebook.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: On Canada Day, reporter Amanda Persico wanted to profile a refugee, and share his trials and triumphs as he found safety in Canada and tries to get his family here, too.



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Bring a red and white dessert to the party

A chilled summer dessert is a great way to celebrate Canada's birthday and this one features local strawberries and Ontario goat cheese that achieve a Canada Day worthy red and white effect. Fragrant fresh local strawberries create a tasty topping for this cold creamy dessert featured in the recipe section of the Ontario Farm Fresh website.

Method: In a bowl and using electric hand mixer, beat together cheese, sugar, cream and liqueur until smooth and fluffy. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or until well chilled.



Strawberries: Meanwhile, in a bowl, stir together strawberries, sugar, vanilla and orange rind until well coated.

Divide cheese mixture into bowls and top with strawberries.

Makes 6 servings.

Make-ahead: Goat cheese mixture can be made up to three days ahead.

For a richer and creamier taste, let the cheese mixture come to room temperature to serve.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: n/a

Per serving: About 276 cal, 10 g pro, 14 g total fat (9 g sat fat), 25 g carb, 2 g fibre, 36 mg chol, 189 mg sodium. %RDI: iron 9%, calcium 8%, vit A 19%, vit C 83%
Source: Ontario Goat Cheese (ontariogoatcheese.ca)
Find more recipes at www.farmfreshontario.com.

Strawberries and Chevre Romanof

- 1 large log (10 oz/300 g) Ontario chevre (soft, unripened goat cheese), at room temperature
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) 35% whipping cream
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) orange liqueur

Strawberries:

- 3 cups (750 mL) sliced fresh strawberries
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) grated orange rind

HAPPY
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Celebrating Canada 2021

On July 1, Canada will mark 154 years since Confederation. Canada Day has traditionally been an occasion for celebration and it can also be a day of reflection. Looking back, there are achievements and accolades as well as scars and wounds that have yet to heal. Looking forward, there are opportunities for healing and building a better country. On Canada Day we acknowledge the challenges faced by this nation while also celebrating its people, places and accomplishments.

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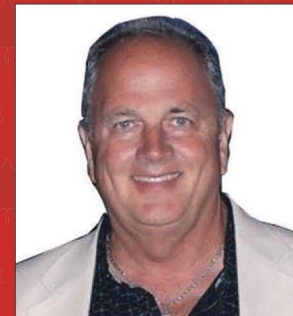
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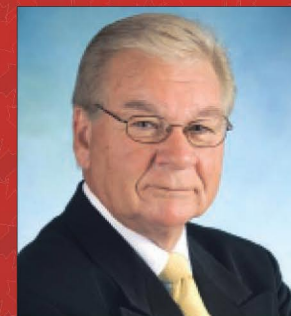
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