

Today's Program

Julie Mahfouz Rezvani,
Mes Amis Canada

Host

Karen Scott

Location

The National Club,
303 Bay Street

Topic

Civic Engagement
in the Age of Digital
Media

Eye Clinics

- by Karen Scott



In collaboration with St. Michael's Hospital, Islamic Institute of Canada, Prism Eye Care, Islamic Relief Foundation, Kensington Eye Clinic, and dozens of ophthalmologists, optometrists, opticians, and medical students from all over the Greater Toronto Area, Mes Amis Canada has organized five eye clinics serving just under 800 newcomer Canadians who have fled many different countries. More than half are children.



Julie Mahfouz Rezvani is the co-founder and Executive Director of Mes Amis Canada, a non-profit, civil society organization which has assisted over 2000 refugees and new immigrants to settle into the GTA.

Founded originally as the Clothing Drive in 2015, the membership of Mes Amis Canada ballooned exclusively through its highly focused use of digital and traditional media channels. The simple goal of collecting clothing turned into a store where newcomers could come and shop for free. Pop-up clothing shops, food distribution, toy drives, vision screening clinics and social enterprises followed. These broad initiatives dedicated to assisting our newest Canadians earned Mes Amis Canada the June Callwood Award for Excellence in Volunteerism, the Humanitarian of the Year Award and various other recognitions.

Julie is also the founder and Managing Director of The Orion Group Inc., a boutique search firm headquartered out of Toronto with national and international clients. She took a sabbatical from this role when the first large group of Syrian refugees arrived in late 2015. She has previously held the role of Vice President of Sales for Direct Energy, a worldwide publicly listed energy retailer.

As a mother of two young children, Julie's compassion and desire to assist refugees is rooted in her Syrian-born husband's family, many of whom still live in wartorn areas of Syria. Julie sits on the Board of Directors for COSTI Immigrant Services and is the recipient of the Governor General's Sovereign Medal.

The clinics are the brainchild of **Tarek Bin Yameen**, a second-year medical student at U of T in partnership with **Dr. Myrna Lichter**, a lecturer in U of T's Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences.

When fleeing for their lives, the last thing refugees think of is getting their eyes checked. After they arrive here, this is still not going to be a top priority. There are challenges resulting from lack of awareness of services provided, limited proficiency in English, and accessibility of the services. "Unless something is totally broken, they are not going to look for help to fix it" says Julie Rezvani.

Through the generosity of countless volunteers, the Eye Clinics have addressed all of the impediments to receiving eye care from some of our city's top professionals. The clinics are widely publicized on social media and information is disseminated to various agencies and networks supporting refugees, and online registration is quick and easy. Interpreters are provided for each individual or family based on their preference. The interpreter accompanies them for the duration of their visit to the clinic. As well, bus transportation is provided to and from the clinic directly to each one's residence.

Lichter said she has been deeply moved by how many people have chosen to help with the clinics, and that people who get involved are often glad they did. "It puts a face to a problem, so these refugees aren't just numbers," she said. "In a world with so much bad, this will make you feel good".

The clinics are also very personal for Bin Yameen: "I grew up in Yemen during the civil war in 1994 and we lived in a refugee camp. We had a cholera outbreak and 40 people perished. I survived because I had my vaccination. When I see these kids in the clinic, it is very personal to me," said Bin Yameen, whose family came to Canada and settled in Brampton in 2001.

Bin Yameen and Lichter hope to present and publish research based on the clinics over the next year or two, which they believe will be the first scientific investigation on the health of a refugee population in Canada.

Please go to the following links to read more:

The Toronto Star:
<https://goo.gl/1wczX4>

University of Toronto:
<https://goo.gl/YhRxSo>

Mes Amis Canada intends to offer several more eye clinics in 2018. Please look for the announcements on social media.



Left to right: Tarek Bin Yameen and Dr Myrna Lichter with Sherif El-Defraway (Chair of Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences) at the clinic in May 2017.

The Countdown has begun...only one week away! for Toronto's oldest running Christmas Party for Children Celebrating its 88th year on SATURDAY, December 2nd!

As December 2nd quickly approaches, we thought you'd enjoy seeing a few photos from 2016.

Photo #1 - Committee Member Don Bell is holding the last couple of bags of toys. Don, John Lloyd and I picked up TWO full van loads of toys donated by The Toronto Fire Fighters.



Photo #2 - Susan Howson has a look of satisfaction that all the children's take-home gift bags were well stuffed by her team of volunteers. Mitra Goodarzi and her team filled balloons with helium gas and tied them onto the gift bags. A special thank you to Don Bell for donating balloons, helium gas and ribbons year after year.



Photo #3 - This is one of the most fun events for the kids, when they throw the soft, white snowballs at the police volunteers on the stage. This year, we'll have some coloured balls for CNIB children. Jay Phelps has many helpers, including table hosts, running this operation with help from Brent Thomas.

Photo #4 - Here's a peek into a small area of Santa's Hall. Barbara Thomson, with her team of volunteers, ensures that the children and their families are directed to Santa for family photos. Also hidden behind black velvet drapery will be Bill Empey and his photography team. Thank you Jeff and Bill for securing printers so that families can have a framed photo of their Santa visit.



This year, we'll be getting some new snowflakes, which Alice Gomes' class along with 2 other classes, have been creating. We need these to brighten up those dark drapes. Thank you Alice, even though we suspect your husband, Brent Thomas, volunteered you. Just outside of Santa's Hall we'll have Anny-Sandra Hamel taking Santa line-up coloured coupons while Doug and Lilia Hughes control the line.

Photo #5 - The Youth Exchange Students are always a delightful addition to our party. The 2016 students introduced themselves and told everyone which country they are from. Jeff Dobson looks after the students, year after year and gets them to our party early, so that they have lots of time to change into costumes and greet the guest children as they arrive, then Annie Chu and Marcy Berg take over.



The newest addition to our Committee is Karl Kremer, who's been very busy asking for donations from many organizations. Thank you, Karl. We also have Dawn-Marie King setting up the registration area, liaising with the 6 group reps, keeping Susan Howson informed as to number of special guests for gift bags, coordinating where all supplies are to be delivered...our 'go to' Rotarian.

Don Brooks has a long list of Rotaract tasks (Catherine Woodford recruited from all 3 Rotaract Clubs) assisted by Rohit Tamhane. The list includes snowflake pinning, setting up 2 face painting tables, plus coordinating the entire clean up and bins back to Rotary Office, when the party ends.

Andria Case, CTV / Bell Media, will be attending.

Thanks to the many, many volunteers. We couldn't do without you. Let's have a blast and enjoy our special guests and their families. Lorraine Lloyd, Chair





The al Zahabi Family – Six Months In

- by Maureen Bird



We welcome the entire family this week. Muneer, wife Lubna, daughter Sara, 14, son Sami, 8 and son Karam, almost 3, will be joining us for lunch.

They are living across from the Victoria Park subway with easy access to transportation and Newcomer Services within a few short blocks. Sara and Sami are in school while Lubna and Muneer are studying English. Karam is at daycare with Lubna's ESL program.

They have had a busy time. The first few weeks they walked in Toronto Beach area but since then have been to Niagara Falls, Toronto Island, ROM, and took advantage of a Toronto Welcome pass so have been to Aquarium, CN Tower, Toronto Zoo and other attractions. We also took them for a day in the Kawartha Lakes. They also had two Thanksgiving dinners with team members.



Lubna, Karam, Sara, Muneer, Sami and Maureen Bird

Lubna has many craft skills and is excellent at crochet and jewellery making. Last weekend she participated in her first craft sale – her ad is below.

Hi... Are you interested in buying a handmade crochet gift for your wife, kids or your loved ones? Christmas is almost here, so it's about time.

Golden Crochet

is honored to invite you to:
The ANNUAL CRAFT FAIR 2017
At CORPUS CHRISTI PARISH
1810 Queen St. East
Sat. Nov. 18th, 10:00 AM - 6:30 PM
Sun. Nov. 19th, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Looking forward to see you all there

Facebook: goldencrochet Instagram: goldencrochett
Email: goldencrochett@gmail.com Phone: 647-773-3837

Muneer is starting an English upgrade program at Seneca in January, which will give him access to new career opportunities. In the meantime he is working on driving lessons to get his full license. He is still looking for part-time work in media design and can create business cards and flyers at a reasonable fee.

Please welcome them at our lunch.

Club Lunch Christmas - Friday, December 15th

- by Duana Jones-Simmonds



The 2017 Christmas Party Planning Committee is very excited to continue the Club's tradition by celebrating Christmas at the upcoming Luncheon scheduled for **December 15th**. We anticipate that we will have a full house filled with fun and laughter. It's a time of fellowship that brings members' friends and family together to celebrate the spirit of Christmas. It's also a time when Club members get to know each other better.

To help make the event successful, we are counting on our members to contribute in many ways, such as volunteering their time, donating gifts for the auction and raffle, helping to decorate, and welcoming new faces – our guests. Who knows, this may lead to an increase in membership – new members are always welcome.

So what have we done so far? Already, John Fortney has said 'yes' to the Emcee Role. We are introducing steel pan music into our repertoire. We believe that this will be a welcomed addition to the luncheon. Already, some members have enthusiastically committed to donating gifts for the raffle and auction. The Planning Committee is building a program that will lift your spirits.

The buffet Luncheon is from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. Just one lunch ticket will get you through the door. If you are bringing guests, you are encouraged to come early and reserve your seats, for this event will be one to be remembered.

RI President

Ian Riseley

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The Rotary Club of Toronto Club 55 – 1912

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Karen Scott

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Brian Porter

What You Missed Reporter for November 24:

Luba Rascheff

The Four-way test of the things we think, say, or do

1. Is it the Truth?
2. Is it Fair to all concerned?
3. Will it Build Goodwill and Better Friendships?
4. Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?

Upcoming Speakers & Events

December 2017

1 Amanda Martin, Highway for Heroes

8 Seniors Christmas Party

15 Club Christmas Party

22 & 29 No meetings

Events

December 2 - Children's Christmas Party

Propose a Speaker – Contact

Mario Voltolina, Chair

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Tel: 416-720-7236

Send articles

to therotaryvoice@gmail.com

Editor-in-chief: Maureen Bird

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Mary Lach, our Newest Club Builder



Mary Lach was honoured last Friday with a Club Builder Award. She joined our club in 1989 and holds the classification of travel agency – retail. She was sponsored into our club by member Ron Waddling, at a time when women had only recently been accepted as members by Rotary International and they started to take their place in our club.

She is currently a member of the club board and the liaison director for Women’s Initiatives Committee and Fellowship and Entertainment Committee. She is also on the Senior Citizens Committee and has recently chaired that committee for two years as well as a year in the 1990s. Her love of Seniors and dedication to that cause provided strong leadership for the committee as they planned and executed a process to use Laughlen Centre funds for many initiatives to benefit seniors.

Though this member tends to be somewhat reserved and likes to “fly under the radar”, she is a great mentor, extremely dedicated and conscientious, she is sincere and always wants to do the best for our club.

Roadmap to 2020 #5 – Club Assembly



We had 64 members participating in the Club assembly this past Monday at the National Club. Using the input from the three focus groups, Kevin Power’s team of new directors, with Prince Kumar as spokesperson, ably assisted by Brent Thomas at the computer, compiled a list of initiatives to prioritize. Heads down, eyes on our devices we ranked the initiatives using an online survey! Well done all! Results to follow.

What You Missed November 17, 2017

- by Maureen Bird



Monitor Bob Smith introduced one visiting Rotarian, two Rotaractors and 5 guests at the National Club.

Among many announcements, President Pat said they are finalizing the list of 50 early registrants to RI 2018 who will receive an “award” from the club of \$100. And there is more! Anyone registering by December 15 will receive \$75 from the club! Go. online now as there is also a \$100 early bird discount

We still need home hosting for our Exchange student Antoine Rys who is currently with Anny-Sandra Hamel. Please help!

Sylvia Geist, Past Chair, Marketing & Communications, had the pleasure of presenting Past President Susan Hunter with the “Year of Voices, 2016-17” as a special memento. Valerie Clarke then had the lovely task of presenting Mary Lach with the “Club Builder” Award for her great service.

Susan Hunter introduced our guest speaker, our own member, Lorna Johnson. We must recognize more often the great talent we have in our club! Lorna spoke about FinTech, financial technology to those of us who were wondering.



Left to right: Sylvia Geist presents Past President Susan Hunter with her special memento.

Fintech refers to start-ups which are able to compete with banks and others because technology and data storage are easier and cheaper. They start with Design Thinking - how customers, not the banks, want the process to work.

It took a while for big banks to realize they were losing business to companies like PayPal. State Farm found the best predictors of risk are examining a person’s Facebook contacts, combining data and social media. Financial Institutions are embracing this 4th wave of Industrial Revolution, partnering with Fintechs. We are get better products. New businesses grow the economy. Microfinance and Fintechs work together to reduce global poverty.

Silicon Valley is a technology Super-cluster. Toronto-Kitchener-Waterloo could be “Silicon North.” One requirement is a tech-savvy work force. Having more females studying computer science will be critical. Organizations like “Girls-Who-Code” are helping close this gap.

In response to requests from our members, Lorna will write an article on Blockchain for the Voice. Watch this space.

Michael Morgan won the wine. The 50-50 pot grows.

The Rotary Club of Toronto

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