



REFUGEE ACTION SCOTLAND

REFUGEE ACTION SCOTLAND

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2016



SYRIAN SCOTTISH COMMUNITY

Hi everyone and welcome to the first of our regular newsletters !



In this issue

1. ABOUT US
2. NEWS
3. WHAT HAPPENS TO MY DONATIONS
4. HELPING AT HOME
5. FUNDRAISERS
6. RAISING AWARENESS

Our Donation Drop-off and Volunteering days are changing from May

From May, we will be changing our drop-off day for donations to once a month but we will be making it a social event too ! The drop-off day will be the last Sunday of every month so our collection day in May will be on Sunday 29th. We will continue to open on the last Sunday of every month and will be making it more of an event with Bake Sales, Jumble Sales, Free Shops, Auctions and any other fund raising ideas people may have. We believe that this strategy is the most effective way in which we can continue to distribute humanitarian aid while managing the time, space & volunteering resources available to us. Everyone's support has been amazing but as our regular volunteers know, it does tend to take over and we want this organisation to continue without having a negative impact on anyone. This way also provides an opportunity for more donation days to be arranged in other towns and cities at other times in the month and as these have worked really well so far in Linlithgow and Falkirk we'd like to do more on this front.

We are also currently organising Drop-Off points around the city. These will be located in businesses, shops and cafés all over the city and will be available for people who cannot make our Drop-Off days to drop off donations in their own area. If you run a local business and would be willing to offer us space, please get in touch !

Please spread the word about our new donation days !



About Us

Re-Act were formed as a not-for-profit NGO in August 2015 when a group of friends decided they could not sit back and watch the Refugee Crisis in Europe unfold without doing whatever they could to help. We initially set up as a sub-group of CalAid London with the aim of sending donated goods to "The Jungle" camp in Calais but as events unfolded we quickly realised that more wide-ranging efforts would be needed across Europe, the Middle East and here at home and subsequently Re-Act : Refugee Action Scotland was born. We now have our own sub-groups in Fife, Linlithgow, Lochaber, Falkirk and Edinburgh University and work with groups and individuals right across the country.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY DONATIONS?

GOODS DONATIONS

We collect donated goods (Clothes/Tents/Food etc.) at Studio 24 then our volunteers sort them into appropriate categories in large sacks (Trousers/Tops/Jackets/Shoes etc.) for easier distribution on the ground. These are then stored at our warehouse until we have enough to send to an area in need.

So far, we have sent approximately 450 TONS of donations around the world.

Here's where your donated goods were sent :



Calais

Between August 15 and May 16 we have sent a total of 18 x Van loads and 1 x 18 ton Truck to the camps in Calais and Dunkerque containing clothes, shoes, food, stoves, tents and assorted camping equipment.

In conjunction with Caravans For Calais and Jungle Canopies we have kitted out and transported several caravans with equipment and bedding to be sent to the Calais camp to be used as office space and accommodation for unaccompanied children.

We also paid for solar panels to power the Refugee Info Bus which will be an internet information and technology hub for refugees in Calais



Croatia

In October 15 we drove 5 x Vans and 1 x 18 ton Truck full of aid to refugees in transit across Croatia. We also funded 2 trips of multiple vans of further aid by our partner organisation Edinburgh Cares.



Worldwide - Shipping Containers :

Shipping containers of essential aid have also been distributed to refugee camps across the globe :

- October 15 - Lebanon
- November 15 - Turkey
- November 15 - Samos, Greece
- December 15 - Chios, Greece
- January 16 - Syria
- March 16 - Syria
- April 16 - Leros, Greece
- May 16 - Syria

EVENTS IN SCOTLAND

HELPING AT HOME

Here at home, we help different communities in many different ways

Jumble Sales and Free Shops

Along with all the other donations, we receive some which are unsuitable to be sent abroad. We use these donations to set up Jumble Sales in order to raise more operating funds. These jumble sales however also operate as “Free Shops”. We distribute cards to recently arrived refugees in Edinburgh and also to the Homeless community which entitle them to come down to the jumble sales where they can collect anything they need for free. They can also collect items which have been specifically donated for refugees arriving here such as TV’s and electrical equipment, kids pushchairs and kids toys.



MONETARY DONATIONS

As an organisation of volunteers, no money is lost in wages or administration and our only expenditure is on materials, fuel and shipping costs. To date we have collected approximately £55,000 in monetary donations. These have been spent in a variety of ways.

Approximately £30,000 has been spent buying food and water in local economies across France, Croatia and the Greek islands to distribute to refugees in transit and in camps, benefiting the refugees and also the local economies.

We paid for 10,000 meals cooked by the local community for refugees in Samos, Greece.

We gave small donations to the local community in Samos to recompense them for money they paid from their own pockets to cook meals for refugees.

We bought military grade Infra Red sights for the Samos Divers enabling them to react faster and be far more efficient in saving lives by locating and rescuing people from the sea.

Redistribution of Unsuitable Donations

Locally, we also work closely with homeless hostels, food banks and charities where we redistribute items which are unsuitable to be sent abroad. To date we have worked with : Shakti Women’s Aid, Cyrenians, Women’s Aid, Fresh Start, Home Start, Street Works and Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home.

Local Councils

Another thing we do at a local level is to work with local councils to support refugees arriving here in any way we can. One of the things we did is have our volunteers make up bags of clothing, toys and toiletries for all the families who arrived through the government’s relocation scheme.

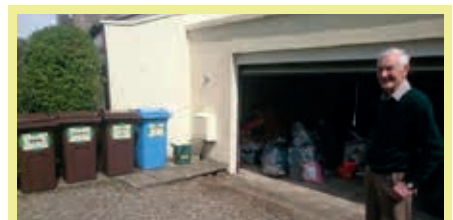
Play Groups and Women’s English Lessons and Conversation Group

We have started to run a weekly Playgroup and Women’s English Lessons and Conversation Group in Wester Hailes Library for predominately Syrian woman but they are open to all. These have been extremely successful and we plan to continue and expand this program. If you would like to help or take part please contact us.

FUNDRAISERS

As well as our own Jumble Sales, a lot of our donated funds have been achieved through our supporters organising Fundraising Events. Events so far have included Bake Sales, Film Nights, Comedy Nights at The Stand and Teviot House, Rumpus for Refugees (an all day family event), The World’s Biggest Pub Quiz, and initiatives run by local Schools and Community Centres. Please check for local events in your area.

If you want to get involved and have any fundraising ideas why not contact us ?



Many thanks to William and Elizabeth Ross who have kindly created a permanent collection point in their home in Linlithgow by converting bins in their driveway to allow the public to drop off their donations 6 days a week. Since it was created in Febuary over fifty large sacks have been filled. As well as being sent abroad, some donations were given to refugee families recently arrived in West Lothian.

RAISING AWARENESS

Since our inception we have tried many ways to raise awareness of the Refugee Crisis as well as sending aid.

Political Pressure

Re-Act along with other similar organisations met up with Edinburgh East MP Tommy Sheppard where he signed a declaration stating that the government should increase the number of refugees we receive from 10,000 to 50,000. We also discussed things such as private sponsorship schemes. This is an ongoing situation and if anyone can offer a refugee either a house or a place in their own home this will strengthen our case so please get in touch.

Amnesty Scotland – National Conference and AGM

Re-Act director Keefe McKie and Dr. Amer Masri from Scotland 4 Syria were invited as Guest Speakers and panellists at Amnesty Scotland's National Conference and AGM



October – Edinburgh Sees Syria vigil.

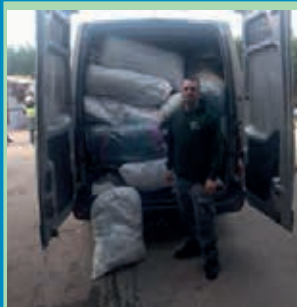
In October we organised a vigil at the Scottish Parliament from midday to midnight to raise awareness of the plight of refugees. Over the course of the day, 2,500 people attended.

March - March For Syria

In March we organised an awareness march with Edinburgh Cares from the Royal Mile to the Scottish Parliament.



Stuart Martin is a legend, He has picked up and delivered Gas, Food, Caravans, Batteries, Clothing and Financial Aid to refugees in Calais. Not only that he's done it several times and also assisted in moves & building whilst in Calais. You can follow Stuarts trips on facebook search for 'Stuarts trips to france'



Iain Elstone has been a Re-act volunteer from the beginning, has made several trips to Calais and Collected all round Scotland and has been instrumental in setting up our Aberdeen operation.

Unsung Heroes



Thorfinn and his horsevan is a regular sight collecting and transporting aid around Scotland and to Calais. Many thanks to Thorfinn for his outstanding efforts.

Special thanks go to all the hard working volunteers, who collect, sort, bag and distribute aid, without your help we couldn't do what we do. Additional thanks to Alistair, Fiona and the team at the council working with us.

If you would like to donate, have any fund raising ideas or would like to volunteer visit us at www.re-act.scot