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A little help adds up to big things



IT'S A PARTNERSHIP THAT REALLY WORKS

In a nondescript building on the corner of 118 Avenue and 96 Street sits an office where Abdul Daash Hussein hopes to do great things for the community.

With a little help. As secretary and co-ordinator of the African Canadian Society for Aid and Immigration Development, Hussein has seen the value and importance of collaborating with different community groups to tackle various social issues.

"Our organization is out to partner with Somalis, other Africans and Canadians," Hussein emphasizes, adding that developing relationships and working with others "doesn't happen overnight".

As a refugee from Somalia, he uses the Somali community as an example.

PART 3 OF 6

"The Somali community is a clan-based society. We come to Canada

with those labels, and normally clans stick to their own people. What I see are three main Somali groups and I work with all of them, and I'm on good terms with their leaders," he explains.

"I don't see any reason to not be part of these other clans and why we should remain divided. I can't see why we can't work together."

Formally established in 2007, the African Canadian Society for Aid and Immigration Development was founded by a few Somali ...

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Abdul Daash Hussein
AFRICAN CANADIAN SOCIETY SPOKESPERSON

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community members as a way to address needs and concerns in the community.

"We started helping low-income people file their income tax for free," says Hussein.

"Canada Revenue Agency trained four volunteers how to file the paperwork and how to handle the papers in a confidential way. We do this for anyone who needs help, not just Somalis."

In the past year, the organization has helped more than 200 families file income tax returns.

In addition, the organization developed a youth crime prevention program that brings youth and police officers together to play soccer.

The goal, says Hussein, is to help youth and police get to know each other and develop positive relationships.

Other services also include helping elderly women out of isolation, and offering parenting classes for immigrants and refugees, with a focus on helping fathers become more involved in their child's life.

Hussein acknowledges that the organization has been able to reach out to a wider network of people to offer their services because of their partnership with the Edmonton Oromo Society, Canadian Hearts Across Borders Association and Somali Parents Association.

Now sharing an office space together, Hussein is confident that their collaborative efforts will only continue to strengthen each other's work in the community.

"If we are divided we could lose a lot," he says.

Since the organization is entirely volunteer-run, Hussein hopes to recruit more people.

"Everyone is a volunteer, everyone works full-time

and everyone has a family, so we are all busy people," he laughs, adding that he himself works full-time for the City of Edmonton, spending much of his time off managing the day-to-day operations of the organization.

If the organization had more volunteers, it would help lighten the workload from the few core volunteers who manage the programs and services.

"We need more volunteers, especially volunteers to help with the income tax and work with youth," Hussein describes, emphasizing that anyone is welcome to volunteer.

"My goal is to see everyone working together to make things better. If we have more volunteers, we can achieve

that," he says.

To learn more about the African Canadian Society for Aid and Immigration Development and how to help, e-mail Abdul Daash Hussein at daashow@hotmail.com or call 780-477-0079.

Over the next three weeks, Volunteer Edmonton will be examining how immigrants in Edmonton are making a huge impact on our communities.

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and non-profit organizations are carrying out and what it is that Volunteer Edmonton is involved in. Contact Evelyn Pham at 780-732-6655 or by e-mail at epham@volunteeredmonton.com.

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